

DIALOGUES

ON

PERSONAL and FAMILY RELIGION,

BETWEEN

A MINISTER and one of his PARISHIONERS

To which are added

FORMS of PRAYER

For the FAMILY and the CLOSET:

Written by the Reverend, Learned and Holy

MR. RICHARD BAXTER:

ABRIDGED

By BENJAMIN FAWCETT, M.A.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE EAST

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE WEST

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE SOUTH

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE NORTH

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE MIDDLE

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE NORTH

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS OF THE SOUTH

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P R E F A C E.

TH E R E is reason to believe, that the *following Dialogues* were originally drawn from the life, and not the mere creatures of imagination. The *Author* wrote them about the *fifty-seventh* year of his age, after he had been intimately acquainted with serious religion from his childhood, and had been the happy instrument of forming multitudes to the christian temper and character, by a long course of very successful labours, not merely from the *pulpit* and the *press*, but in his *pastoral visits from house to house*. Blessed be God, there are some faithful ministers now, as there undoubtedly have been in every age of the christian church, whose observation and experience, in their private converse with the souls under their care, have borne a near resemblance to the instructive and familiar representations of these *Dialogues*.

Dr. *Calamy* says of this performance, "It was well accepted, and has been very useful; many thousands of them being distributed through the nation." Such an extensive distribution was Mr. *Baxter's* avowed design, and therefore he prefixed to his book a serious and earnest address to the *rich*, entreating them to exercise their pious benevolence in giving it away amongst their *poor neighbours*. By
this

P R E F A C E.

this means it soon passed through numerous editions. Perhaps some of the *affluent* in the present day may think this *abridgement* better subservient to their benevolent designs, as the *whole book* could not have been reprinted without *three or four times* the expence.

The same manner of abridging is observed in this, as in several others of Mr. *Baxter's* pieces, and is more particularly explained at the latter end of the *Compiler's Preface* to the *Abridgement* of the *Saint's Everlasting Rest*. But in drawing up the *Forms of Prayer* it was thought proper to take much greater liberty.

If the perusal of the *following pages* should contribute, through a divine blessing, to the religious improvement of here and there a *family* or *person* only, the *Compiler* will thankfully esteem it as a merciful answer to the prayers of many, and particularly of those worthy ministers, both of the *established church*, and amongst the *dissenters*, whose request was more immediately gratified in his undertaking this work.

B. E.
Kidderminster,

December, 30, 1768.



DIALOGUE I.

The Minister endeavours to fix his Parishioner's serious attention upon the interests of his soul and eternity.

M I N I S T E R.

WAS intimating, neighbour, when I saw you last, how much I esteem myself obliged, besides preaching in public, to watch over the individuals of my flock, and privately to assist them in their religious interests, to the best of my ability, and as often as they themselves shall favourably accept of it. For this purpose, I intreated, and you as readily promised me, now and then an hour, when you had leisure from other affairs.

P A R I S H I O N E R.

Indeed, Sir, you are welcome. But easily as I granted your very reasonable request, I must acknowledge myself by no means fit to talk with you on religion.

M. I come with no other design, but that of a kind and faithful friend to your soul, and to help you in the way to eternal life. Permit me therefore to ask, what do you think would become of you, were you this day to enter into your eternal state?

P. God knows. We must all hope the best, and put our trust in his mercy.

B

M. Un-

M. Undoubtedly God knows; but do you think a person may not know, with some degree of certainty, whether he shall be saved or not?

P. Who can tell the secrets of God?

M. May not a person know it, if God tells him?

P. Yes, Sir; but God tells nobody such things.

M. Is not the holy scripture the word of God? And doth not God tell us, whatever scripture tells? When a man dieth, doth not his soul go, either to heaven, or hell? And must not the difference be very great between those that go to inconceivable glory, and those that go to inexpressible misery?

P. I know he is a just God. He would not take one to heaven, and send another to hell, if their characters were both alike.

M. Do you think there is so great a difference between the godly and the wicked, and yet that it cannot be known, even by themselves, upon enquiry? Cannot you know what you *love*, and what you *hate*?

P. Though a man may know his own mind, God only can know the heart.

M. You have heard of scripture-promises to the godly, and threatenings against the ungodly; but to what purpose are they, if no person can discern whether promises or threatenings belong to himself?

P. Not unless he have some guess, or hope, that he is one of the godly.

M. You know scripture speaks much of *the children of God*, and *the children of the devil*. The former are said to have God's *nature* and *image*, and to be *born of God*, and to be *made holy*, in some measure, as *God is holy*. The latter are said to be *of the devil*, and to be *taken captive by him at his will*, and to *do his works*. And can you think God and the devil are so much alike, that their image and nature, their works and children cannot be distinguished from each other?

P. God forbid, I should think so!

M. Scripture contains a great variety of expressions, to describe the children of God, and to enable us to know

know whether we are such. But how can you imagine all these descriptions are given us in vain?

P. No part of God's word can be in vain.

M. Those descriptions are not only designed to *make the godly know*, that they are the children of God; but that knowing it, they may even *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. They are therefore commanded to *rejoice in the Lord*, and to *rejoice evermore*. This command cannot belong to the ungodly, but very plainly implies the knowledge the godly have of their own holiness and happiness.

P. I never thought so much of these things before. I have no such comfortable self-knowledge.

M. What! Have you no well-grounded hope of your own salvation? No distinct knowledge of your spiritual state? Permit me freely to ask, have you left nothing undone which you were capable of doing, in order to make sure of everlasting life?

P. I wish I could say so! God forgive me! I have had some random thoughts of these things, but never attended to them in earnest.

M. I am sorry for it. But pray tell me, what was it that hindered you?

P. Alas! Sir, I have had a thousand hinderances. My heart and time have been so filled up with the cares and crosses of this world, or with vain amusements, and sensual delights, that I have had no leisure to think seriously of my soul and eternity.

M. Was this doing well and wisely? What real good, what inward satisfaction is there left behind?

P. You need not ask me such a question. The pleasure is all gone; but I am hoping for more.

M. And how long will that endure, which you hope for? Are you sure to live another week, or day, or hour? Are you not sure that an end will come, and come shortly, and irresistibly? Will it comfort a dying man, to tell him *he hath had his good things here*, that this world hath done for him all it can do, and now he must part with it for ever?

P. I know all this. But our eyes are apt to be dazzled with the things of the present world.

M. Is it not the worst blindness, to prefer the momentary joys of sin, before holy and everlasting pleasures? When death comes, is not time for ever gone? Is it not our business in this world to prepare for heaven? And must we not have our heaven or hell as we have here made preparation?

P. I have often heard this, but without being stirred up to serious consideration, still hoping for longer life.

M. But you know the longest life must have an end. Did you never think of your soul's appearing in another world? Have you not trod on the dust of those who lived before you in sinful pleasures? Is such a life better than heaven? Is such a corruptible body fit to be pampered with all the care and labour of our lives, to the total neglect of our souls?

P. I remember, I was once sick, and like to die, and then I was troubled, fearing what should become of me, and resolved I would amend my life; but, alas! when I recovered, all wore off, and I was as eager for this world as I had ever been.

M. When you confess yourself unready to die, I wonder how you can quietly lie down to sleep, lest before morning you should awake in a miserable eternity. How can you forget, that if you die in an unconverted state, you are lost for ever? Dare you wilfully or negligently live a day unprepared for death, while there is such uncertainty in this mortal life?

P. You say well. But, uncertain as life is, I thank God I am yet alive.

M. And will you presume upon the patience of God, so as to harden your heart, and delay your repentance? Will God always wait your leisure? Have you ever seriously thought, what it is for a soul to leave this world, and to appear in the world of spirits, to be fixed in heaven or hell, according to its preparation in this life?

P. You

DIALOGUE I.

5

P. You trouble me, and make me afraid. But why should we begin our fears too soon? They will come soon enough of themselves.

M. What! Is dying all you look at? It is a trifle, compared with what comes after. Death cannot be prevented, but damnation may. Hell is not to be escaped, without fear, and care, and diligence. Were you to die like a beast, you would have nothing to fear after death, and in that case your fearing beforehand would but increase your sorrow, without doing any good. But you *must* live after death, and you *may* live for ever in heavenly joys; and should not such things be thought of seriously, *while it is called, to-day?*

P. Really, Sir, I am afraid, if I should set myself to think of another world, as seriously as you talk of it, it would make me melancholy or mad, which I know hath been the case with some other persons.

M. I bless God your reason is yet continued, and therefore I make my appeal to it. Why did God give you reason, but to use it in preparing for eternity? Is not that man mad, who, having a God to serve, a soul to save, a heaven to obtain, and hell to escape, leaveth all this great work undone, only for the sake of this world's perishing vanities? How pitiable, to hear one, that is thus mad, pleading, that he still neglects his soul for fear of being mad! When men have reason for trifles, and none for their own salvation; when they are only wise for earth, but cheat themselves out of all hope of heaven, that they may go to hell with imaginary ease and honour; may God deliver us from such reason! But pray, what is there in God and Christ, in heaven and holiness, that thinking of them should make a man mad? Is not God better than your house, or land, your labours, or sports? Is he not the best friend you have in the world? Is it not universally allowed, that we ought to love God above all? And if you are not mad in loving your friends, or possessions, why should it make you mad to live in the

love of God? Or, why should the hope of heavenly joys, and frequently meditating upon them, have any tendency to madness? What can so effectually preserve me from being melancholy or mad, as firmly believing, and devoutly contemplating, the promises of future glory?

P. This may be true, if a man were sure of heaven. But when he thinks of hell, will not his fears exceed his hopes?

M. To think of hell despairingly, may indeed drive to madness. But this is not your case. You may fear hell, so as to avoid it, by flying to that saviour, who freely offers you eternal life. No man shall be damned, if he is sincerely desirous to be saved from sin and hell.

P. But why should the thoughts of a future state make many persons melancholy?

M. Amongst the numerous instances of melancholy that have come under my observation, the far greater part of them have arisen, either from bodily distemper, or some worldly disappointment, or both united. many of these were never distressed about their souls and eternity in any degree. And though some of them were, their religious distress seldom or ever appeared, till after their bodily distemper, or their worldly sorrow, or both together, had made considerable progress. I have indeed met with some few under melancholy at the beginning of their penitent sense of sin; but it was manifest that their sins had been of the most enormous kind, so that their horrors of conscience were greater than they were able to bear. The hearts of such great sinners are usually *broken with terrors*, that sin may ever after appear to them *exceeding sinful*, and divine comforts peculiarly precious. But in attempting *to heal such broken hearts*, the want of success, and even the increase of melancholy symptoms, have been too much owing to the unskilfulness of the instrument.

P. What you have said, convinceth me, that, under pretence of avoiding trouble of mind, I must not banish the serious thoughts of my soul and eternity.
But

But indeed, Sir, I have so little thought of these things, that I know not how to set about it, and must intreat your help in guiding my thoughts.

M. You have now hinted another cause of religious melancholy. I mean, when a person, after long and total neglect of his soul, is, by the mercy of God, in some measure made sensible of his sin and danger, presently a multitude of new and awful thoughts crowd in upon his mind, and become unmanageable. He is bewildered, like a man in an untrodden path.—But as you desire advice in your perplexity, let me intreat you first to consider, whether or no your sins are forgiven, and God reconciled to you, and what you think would become of you, if you should die this very night?

P. I told you, that I do not know. But I hope well. For no man must despair.

M. You ought never to despair of conversion and salvation; and it is as much your indispensable duty to try whether you are converted; and if you are not, to despair of being saved without it. As for your *hoping well*, you must know, there is the false hope of the hypocrite, and the well grounded hope of the sincere penitent. To him that repents and believes, God promises forgiveness and salvation, and such a one must hope for it, and God will never disappoint his hope. But do you think God hath any where promised, that all men shall be saved?

P. No, I dare not say so.

M. Or, do you think, that all men shall be saved, if they hope for it?

P. No, but there is some comfort in hoping.

M. But how long will deceitful comfort last? Hath not God said, *Except ye repent, ye shall all perish. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.* Now if any of these persons shall hope to be saved, when God says, they shall not, would they do well to hope? Would it not be hoping that God will lie?

P. Is there any harm in hoping that God will be better than his word?

M. As a *benefactor*, God may give more than he promiseth; but as a *righteous governor*, he must rule according to his laws, or else he deceives us, which he cannot possibly do.

P. But may not a king pardon an offender?

M. I doubt you do not understand, that God at first made a perfect law, which forbade all sin on pain of death, and we all break it daily by every sin; but God being merciful hath given us a saviour, and by him, the forgiveness of all Sins to those who sincerely repent and believe. If you thus repent and believe, God hath already forgiven you. But to refuse forgiveness on God's terms, and yet hope for it; to despise offered mercy, and yet say, you hope for mercy, is the highest affront to God. It is blasphemy to say, that God can be actually reconciled to impenitent sinners. Sin is the misery of the soul. To forgive sin, is to deliver the soul from misery. To save the soul, is to save it from sin. What is heaven, but the perfect likeness and love of God? Can a man be in a state of salvation, if he doth not love God more than sin?

P. I understand these things better. But I cannot relish your seeming to drive men to despair.

M. You greatly mistake me. I am driving you from despair. There is no hope of a sinner's salvation, as long as he continueth in an unconverted state. Everlasting despair in hell is the portion of all those, who die unconverted and unsanctified. Their having no more hope, is the *worm that dieth not*. From such despair I am desirous to keep you. Nothing more effectually hindereth men from repenting and being saved, than their hoping to be saved without true repentance. Will not every wise man have some good reason for his hope? Why then should the soul and eternity be ventured upon a false and uncertain hope?

P. By no means, if we can have a better.

M. Tell me freely then, what are the grounds and reasons of your hope?

P. My

DIALOGUE I.

9

P. My hope is founded on the mercy of God.

M. But God's mercy saveth none in their unconverted state. The question is, whether this mercy will save you?

P. I hope Jesus Christ will be my saviour.

M. Christ saves none in their sins. And why do you hope for his salvation?

P. Is he not *the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world?*

M. He is all-sufficient to save, and will certainly save all that believe in him, and turn to God.

P. I believe in Christ for salvation.

M. If you sincerely believe, you have good reason for your hope. But lest you should be mistaken in an affair of such infinite importance, be pleased to consider the nature of saving faith. You are not only to believe the truths contained in the holy scriptures, but heartily consent to have God for your only God, and Christ for your only saviour, and the holy spirit for your sanctifier, and wholly trust in God through Christ for your acceptance and salvation.

P. I hope I have this faith and trust in God.

M. To assist you in discerning whether this be your faith and trust, permit me to ask you a few questions. Are you firmly persuaded that none can be saved without repentance and conversion, regeneration and holiness, and that *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his?* Do you take the love of God, and his heavenly glory, for your only happiness, and trust in nothing on earth, neither health, wealth, nor any sensual pleasures? Is it all your desire and expectation to have Christ teach you the whole will of God, and forgive all your sins, and by his spirit enable you, not only to forsake lust and wantonness, gluttony and drunkenness, pride and ambition, deceit and covetousness, but also to mortify every sinful desire, and bow your own will to the will of God, and raise you to a holy and heavenly life?

P. This is hard; I know not what to say to it.

B 5

M. As

M. As you trust a physician to cure you, or a lawyer to counsel you, so you must trust God to be better to you than all the world, and to be the lawgiver and ruler of your life; you must trust Christ to save you from the guilt and defilement of sin, and to make you holy in heart and conversation. If any desire to be saved from hell, and not from sin; from the damnings, but not from the reigning power of sin; and to gratify their lusts here, but have heaven at last; this is not trusting, but abusing the mercy of God in Christ. If any believe that God will save sinners without conversion and holiness, this is believing the devil and their own hearts, and not God. If, while God offereth you a heavenly kingdom, you refuse to follow Christ in self denial, and in every suffering for Christ's sake; you do not trust in God, whatever you may pretend. Suppose you were sick, and only one physician could cure you, and he offered to do it freely, if you trusted your life to his skill and care, while by some he was represented as a deceiver, and by others praised as infallible; your trusting him would shew itself, by following his advice, taking his medicines, and forsaking all other. On the contrary, should you say, I trust this physician with my life, yet never go near him, nor take his prescriptions; would it not be madness to expect to be cured by such a trust?

P. I confess this helps me better to understand the nature of faith. I doubt many say, they trust God, and believe in Christ, but keep their sins, and love this world more than heaven and holiness. As for following Christ in suffering for his sake, I thought, Sir, it only belonged to times of persecution; and God forbid that none should be saved but martyrs!

M. But you know Christ requires all his disciples, without exception, to *deny themselves, and forsake all, and take up their cross, and follow him*. If we must do this actually in persecution, we must also do it before in affection and resolution. Can we die for Christ then, unless our heart be prepared for it now? And is it not our baptismal covenant, to renounce the world,

world, the flesh, and the devil? *He that loveth the world, the love of the father is not in him.*—By this time you can form some judgment of your faith and trust, whether it hath been true or false. And pray what else have you to prove that your hope of salvation is well-grounded?

P. I hope I repent of my sins, and God hath promised to forgive them that repent.

M. But what is true repentance?

P. It is to be sorry for my sins, and to wish I had never committed them.

M. There is danger of mistaking the nature of repentance. It is the same thing with conversion; a thorough change of mind, will and life, from fleshly, worldly and ungodly, to spiritual, heavenly and holy, hating the sins which we loved, and loving all the duties which we formerly hated.

P. I beseech you, explain this more fully.

M. True repentance not only changeth a man's opinion, but his heart and conversation; not only turneth him from some particular sin, but from all sin. The true penitent is as much in earnest to subdue and root out every sinful inclination, as ever he formerly was to indulge and fulfil it. He doth not content himself with reforming more open and enormous vices, but strives against a worldly mind, and all inordinate selfishness. He *seeks the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof* in the first place, and with all his might, as infinitely better than this world's happiness. He is not to-day repeating, and to-morrow returning again to folly; but he delights and perseveres in the ways of godliness, as if they were perfectly natural to him.

P. But will not God forgive him, who shall trespass seven times in a day, and seven times in a day, turn again, saying, I repent?

M. If, as Christ teacheth in that passage of scripture, a man wrong you often through infirmity, and as often repeat, you must forgive him. But if your servant, day after day, comes to you, and says, mas-

ter, I have done no work, but I repent, I wish I had done it; will you take this for repentance? We may repent to day of an angry look, or a vain word, and through infirmity may commit the same to-morrow; but we cannot sincerely repent of our past ungodly life, and presently return to it again. Consider whether your's be sincere repentance.

P. Indeed, Sir, as you have examined my case, I intreat you to help me in passing a right judgment of it. Though a patient feeleth his complaints, his physician can better judge of the nature of the disease.

M. But as the patient must tell what he feeleth, be pleased to answer me a few questions — Have you more seriously regarded your soul's everlasting welfare than all your bodily and temporal concerns?

P. I cannot say so, though I have often thought of it.

M. — Are you verily persuaded that your sins deserve the wrath of God for ever?

P. I have been taught so; but my heart never felt my sins so great as to deserve hell.

M. — Have you seen as much need of Christ for your saviour, as a condemned malefactor hath of pardon, and as much desired it?

P. I know we cannot be saved without Christ; but I cannot say I have had such desire.

M. — Have you such faith in the future blessedness of the saints, as to prefer heaven before all the treasures and pleasures of this world, and strive more to secure it than for any thing upon earth?

P. I wish I could say so; I doubt there are but few that rise so high.

M. — Convinced that none can get to heaven without being born again of the spirit of God, have you earnestly desired to be sanctified by the holy spirit, and to be enabled to hate and forsake all sin, and to love God severently, and to serve him faithfully, and have you therefore bound yourself to God through Christ in a solemn covenant?

P. I cannot say so, though I desire to amend.

M. —

M. — Is there no trouble in the world so grievous to you as the sinfulness of your heart and life?

P. I do not find it so; I wish I did.

M. — Had you rather perfectly know, love and serve God, than have all the riches, honours and pleasures of this world?

P. I should be a dissembler to say so.

M. — When you are tempted to your most beloved sin, is the divine command more powerful to keep you from it, than the temptation and your own lust to draw you to it?

P. I wish it were; I should then sin much less.

M. Are you willing to wait upon God in the constant and diligent use of his appointed means of grace, such as, preaching, prayer, and meditation, with the company and counsel of the godly?

P. Happy for them that can, but I cannot.

M. — Are you resolved to part with life and liberty, rather than *make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience?*

P. I ought to do so, but am not able.

M. — Is, a word, if you had never been baptized, would you now take God in baptism for your only God and father, Christ for your only saviour, and the holy spirit for your sanctifier, to save you from sin and hell, and bring you to holiness and glory; resolving to forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and absolutely devoting yourself to God?

P. I ought to promise, and be baptized; but am doubtful of my hearty consent to all this.

M. By these answers I can form some judgment of your condition, and am sorry to say, that you appear to me to be yet unconverted, and under the guilt and power of your sins, even *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.* But your case is not without remedy. If you are willing, salvation may be had. You are not so far from it as many. I observe an openness in your answers, and that you are not, like multitudes, desperately opposing your own conviction and conversion.

P. I

P. I thank you for your plainness and faithfulness; but why do you judge of me so severely?

M. You have yourself confessed, that it is not with you, as it is with all who have the spirit of Christ. I have long been afraid of this, and I will take the freedom to suggest my reasons for it.—One might be often in your company, and hear nothing but worldly talk, not a word of heaven, or that discovered any care of your own soul.—I observed, you seemed always pleased with the conversation of ignorant, worldly men, or merry sensualists; and to disrelish those who might have helped you in the way to heaven.—I never heard of your setting up the worship of God in your family. The souls of your children and servants were totally neglected. And frequently you have been absent from the house of God.—Now and then you have dropped an oath, and in a fit of anger have proceeded to cursing. Common talk and business, or vain amusements, have chiefly filled up your Lord's-days. Such things as these, with the evident want of a mind fixed on God and heaven, made me fear your case as bad as you now confess it. God saveth none but those who supremely love, honour, and obey him; who value Christ as their saviour, breathe his spirit and temper; and labour for heaven more than for earth.

P. What you call a confession, I am not unwilling to repeat. But, careless as I have been of my soul; insensible of my need of Christ, and fond of worldly vanities, I was ready to conclude, that since God is merciful, I might be saved, if I believed in Christ. What it really is to believe in Christ, you have now made me understand better than I ever did before, and I perceive I did not sincerely believe and trust in Christ, when I thought I did.

M. Are there not, think you, such sins as presumption, carnal security, false faith, and false hope, whereby souls are undone?

P. I have often heard preachers say so.

M. What do you apprehend presumption to be?

P. Fan-

P. Fancying we are accepted of God, and in a state of salvation, when we are not.

M. What do you mean by carnal security?

P. Carelessness about our souls, when their danger demandeth our greatest care.

M. What is a false faith?

P. It is believing God hath promised what he hath not, or that Christ will save those whom he hath declared he will not save.

M. And wherein consists a false hope?

P. It is hoping for heaven in a way in which God hath plainly said, he will not give it.

M. Your answers are just; but are not each of these sins chargeable on yourself?

P. I begin to fear it; yet I would fain hope for the best. Pray what would you advise me to do?

M. I have no desire to trouble you with needless fears, nor would I have you conclude your state bad merely on my word; but, when you come home, examine yourself impartially by the word of God, and tell me the result at our next interview.

P. But suppose I should find myself in a bad state, what must I do then?

M. If you should find that yours is really an unconverted state, unholy, destitute of peace with God, and every moment exposed to his eternal wrath and curse, I would then advise you immediately to seek for mercy to pardon you, and for the grace and spirit of Christ to sanctify you, and by no means to despair, for there is an all-sufficient remedy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore I beseech you not to delay your serious and impartial self-examination.

P. Alas! Sir, I know not how to examine myself. It is to me a strange work. Please to direct me.

M. With all my heart, if you will but promise to do your best. And, first, set apart some time for this very business, and then be as earnest in it, as a person that is casting up an account of all he hath in the world. Take one caution with you, not to be unwilling to know the worst by yourself.

P. What

P. What good will it do me to flatter and deceive myself, when it is impossible to deceive God? I desire to know my present state, that I may know what course to take hereafter.

M. When you have read some passage of holy scripture; as for instance, *John III. Romans VIII. Psalm LI.* or any other; then earnestly pray for divine help, and that God will mercifully lead you into self-acquaintance. In order to this, look back on all your past life, and look also into your heart, and let conscience compare your heart and life with the infallible word of God, and be all attention to the voice of scripture and of conscience. Judge yourself, not by a few good or bad thoughts or actions, but by what hath had your chief love; and hath been your leading design, and hath excited your greatest care and diligence. Search what it is, whether God or the creature, whether Christ or your lusts, that hath been uppermost in your esteem, and hath most filled and employed your heart and life. Follow on the search till you know the truth. If you cannot determine at one trial, repeat the trial again and again. May the Lord assist and succeed you! And whenever you are come to a resolution, I shall be glad to see you, and hear what it is.

DIALOGUE II.

The minister explains to his parishioner the nature of a soul's conversion from sin to God and holiness.

Minister. **W**ELL, neighbour, have you examined yourself by the word of God, since I saw you?

Parishioner. I have done something in it.

M. And what do you now think of yourself?

P. When

P. When I read the promises to all that believe in Christ, I was ready to hope myself safe. But in reading farther, I found myself, as you feared, an unconverted sinner, that I *have not the spirit and temper of Christ*, and therefore *am none of his*. But now, Sir, I must intreat you to pity my misery, and tell me, *what must I do to be saved?*

M. Are you resolved to do it, if it shall be explained and proved to you by scripture?

P. By the grace of God, I am resolved to do it.

M. I again assure you, that your case is not remediless. A full and compleat salvation is provided in the gospel for you, as well as for others. This remedy is nothing else but Christ and his grace. *God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* Christ having offered up himself a sacrifice for our sins, and merited our reconciliation, justification and salvation, he promiseth and covenanteth to give us pardon and eternal life. In order to apply this salvation to sinners, he calleth them by his word and ministers, and giveth them his sanctifying spirit to prepare them for heavenly glory, and only requireth of them such faith as shews its sincerity by repentance, love and holy obedience. And is not this glad tidings to a miserable sinner?

P. I perceive there is hope concerning me; but indeed, Sir, I have heard the gospel so carelessly, that I beg to have these things opened to me more plainly.

M. I know you were baptized in infancy; but your parents' covenant-engagement for you serves no longer than till you are capable of covenanting for yourself. Have you ever seriously considered the nature of your baptismal covenant, and renewed it yourself, by giving up yourself to God?

P. I never once attended to it. Only I thought it sufficiently regenerated me, and made me a child of God, and an heir of heaven.

M. But how was you to have forgiveness for sins committed since your baptism?

P. I con-

P. I confessed them to God, and some of them to the minister that received me, to the Lord's-supper, and thought I was then forgiven, though I never had the right influence of it on my heart and life.

M. If, as soon as you were capable, you had sincerely renewed your baptismal covenant, and kept it, you would no more have needed to be converted or regenerated, but only to have repented for particular sins. I will therefore put you upon no other conversion, than to review your baptism, and understand it well, and as deliberately make the same covenant with God over again, as if you yourself had never been concerned with it.

P. If conversion is no more than to be a real christian, instead of a merely nominal and hypocritical one, I have no more reason to object against it, than against baptism or christianity; and this maketh me very desirous to understand the nature of the baptismal covenant.

M. In order to that, it is necessary for you to consider well the principal truths of christianity.

P. I have often repeated the creed which contains them, but never attended to its meaning.

M. We are thereby taught to view the blessed God, as our creator and proprietor, our lord and ruler, our benefactor and chief good, who hath all perfection and excellency in and from himself. We are taught to view ourselves, as creatures of God, who are fallen from our first state of innocence, in which man was made, and for our sinfulness are exposed to the wrath and curse of God; but that divine mercy provided redemption for us through the meritorious incarnation, sufferings and death of the son of God. We are taught to view the covenant of grace, as an engagement of the Father, Son and holy spirit, to become our reconciled God and father, our saviour, and our sanctifier; and an engagement on our part, to give up ourselves sincerely and unreservedly to God, through Christ, by the aids of the holy spirit, for justification and salvation, and in all new and holy obedience;

even

ever renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, that would tempt us to contradict this engagement. This is the baptismal covenant, and you have often seen it outwardly administered. All that sincerely engage in this covenant are justified and sanctified, and have a right and title to eternal life. The holy spirit is peculiarly given to all such, to dwell in them, and gradually renew them to greater knowledge of God, and more fervent love to him, desire after him, and activity for him. We are also taught, that, at death, the souls of men enter into everlasting joy or misery; and that, at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory, and raise the dead, and all men shall receive according to their works. They that have sincerely kept this covenant, so far as in different ages, and under different dispensations of grace, it was made known unto them, shall be openly justified and glorified, and be made perfectly blessed in soul and body, with saints and angels, in the full enjoyment of God for ever. They that have not performed this covenant, shall for ever be deprived of this glory, and suffer the everlasting torments of hell with devils and all impenitent sinners.—Some competent knowledge of these truths is necessary to your understanding the nature of the baptismal covenant, or of repentance, conversion, and real christianity.

P. Alas! Sir, when shall I be able to understand and remember all this?

M. It is by no means necessary to remember these words; if you take in the sentiments, it is enough.

P. Whatever knowledge I may attain in these things, I suppose knowledge alone will not be enough, even though I should be ever so firmly persuaded of their truth and importance. And you have been intimating the necessity of my having something more than an enlightened understanding, or the firmest persuasion, with respect to any truths.

M. Yes, I must now add, that to consent to the baptismal covenant with full purpose of heart and will, is the principal part of religion and holiness,
and

and without which the clearest discerning and firmest belief of the truths contained in the covenant will be utterly ineffectual to eternal salvation. Christ takes you for his own, if you heartily resolve to be his. He complaineth, *men will not come unto him, that they might have life.* And he promiseth, *whosoever come to him, he will in no wise cast them out.*

P. And have I no more to do, but to consent to the covenant with my heart and will?

M. It implieth, that you persevere in your hearty consent, which cannot be, without the whole of practical godliness.

P. Pray, Sir, explain to me what you mean by practical godliness?

M. The foundation of practical godliness is laid in your relation to a Covenant-God. By devoting yourself to him, you become his special property, and therefore must live to him, and seek his glory, and be satisfied with all his disposals. You become the subject of his government, and therefore must endeavour to obey him absolutely. You also become his child and friend, and therefore must abide and abound in faithfulness and love to him.—The design of practical godliness is, that you may be fully delivered from all sin and misery, and be made more holy, more profitable to man, and may more abundantly glorify your father, redeemer and sanctifier, by your bearing the divine image, and breathing a divine temper in the present world; and finally, that you may be perfectly ho'y and happy in the glorious world above, there to dwell with Christ for ever, and with all his saints and angels. This noble and and design must be ever in your eye, to direct and influence all your practice.—The rule of practical godliness is especially the word of God, and gospel of Christ. For the law and light of nature, and of conscience, is insufficient without the holy scriptures. Christ particularly commands us, to believe on him as our saviour, to hope for heaven by his purchase and promise, to love God for his mercy and grace in our

redemption, to pray for the holy spirit, and cherish his influences; to regard the ministers of his gospel, the ordinances of his worship, the discipline of his house, and the sanctification of his day.—The *degrees* of practical godliness necessary to our salvation is sincerity; or, such a prevailing tendency of heart and life to obey our creator and redeemer, as to make it the chief business we transact in the world, and to which every thing else is subservient. But remember always, that you are destitute of this sincerity, unless you have a desire and endeavour after perfection, and a mourning for every conscious imperfection; and that the degrees of future glory must certainly be in proportion to the present degrees of holiness.

—The *enemies* of practical godliness are, at all times, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Be not ignorant of the nature and danger of their opposition, but resolve, by the grace of God, to renounce them more deliberately, and to carry on your resistance and warfare against them to the end of life.

P. This is a great deal to remember.

M. You only think so, because you have so intirely neglected these things in your youth, which is the best time for learning the will of God, and the way of salvation. Had you then loved the scriptures and other pious books, and been much employed in reading, meditation and prayer, and had devoted your Lord's days to these purposes, instead of play and idleness, and vain talk, you would now have found such things as these plain and familiar to you. However, fix upon your memory the substance of what I have been now saying.

P. What is that?

M. I mean this short view of your baptismal covenant, *To believe in, and heartily give up yourself to God the father, Son, and holy spirit, as your creator, redeemer and sanctifier, your proprietor and ruler, your chief good, and ultimate end and aim, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil.*

P. There

P. There is no great difficulty in remembering this, but my heart has been a stranger to the sense and meaning.

M. Your duty is summed up in *love, which is the fulfilling of the law.*

P. What love do you mean?

M. The love of God, of your neighbour, and of yourself.

P. This nobody can object to, and one part of it I shall easily keep; which is, to *love myself.*

M. Alas! poor man, how have you kept it hitherto? What enemy have you had in all the world comparable to yourself? What, though all your enemies should slander, oppress, imprison, or otherwise abuse you? They cannot hinder your salvation, nor make God love you ever the less, nor make death the more terrible to you, nor will their enmity ever be your sorrowful reflection in heaven, provided you do no wrong and injury to yourself. All the enemies in the world cannot force you to commit one sin, nor make God your enemy; but you yourself have committed thousands of sins, and made yourself an enemy to God. O the folly of ungodly men! How hard for them to forgive a small injury to another, and yet they can abuse and destroy their own souls, and even expose them to hell, and after all can easily forgive themselves! Was it not *you, even you yourself,* that forgot your God, neglected your saviour, resisted the holy spirit, refused sanctifying grace, despised heaven, and preferred this perishing world? Was it not you yourself that neither loved holiness, nor a holy God, nor holy thoughts, words, nor ways? Did not you yourself lose your precious time, omit almost all your duty, and exceedingly multiply your own sins? Tho' the devil did his utmost to hurt you, what could he do more than tempt you to sin? And are you a lover of yourself?

P. All this is too true; and yet I am sure I love myself. How then cometh all this to pass?

M. Your

M. Your *self-love* is chiefly dictated by *sense*, little by *reason*, much less by *faith*. Like the brutes, you love your bodily appetites; but you have little or no care for your soul. You love not what is good for yourself; as a sick man loveth his life and health, but abhorreth his meat and medicine. There is a self-love implanted in our nature, and therefore the ten commandments only express the love of God and our neighbour. But the gospel calleth upon sinners to *love, care, and labour* for their own souls. Your very *repentance* consisteth in being angry with yourself, and loathing yourself for your sins. God intreateth you to have mercy on yourself. He hath unchangeably fixed in his gospel the terms on which he will have mercy upon sinners. They will cry to God for mercy, mercy, when the day of judgment is come, and it is too late; but *now*, in this *accepted time*, in this *day of salvation*, no counsel, no reason, no intreaty will persuade them to accept of mercy. Though the ministers of *Christ*, in his stead, beseech men to be reconciled to God, and to accept of his sanctifying and saving mercy, yet all their plea for neglect is, "We hope to be saved, for God is merciful." Like a thief intreated by the judge not to cast away his life, but still returns again to his evil courses, and yet at the bar or gallows crieth out for mercy: Or like a beggar praying for an alms, but refusing it when it is offered.

P. You describe a condition that is very bad. But might it not more properly be compared to a patient desiring his physician to heal him, at the same time that he cannot be prevailed upon to take physick? men would have health without medicines, and salvation without the strait and narrow way to it.

M. There is some truth in your remark, and some mistake. Holiness is not only the soul's medicine, but its health. Therefore to refuse holiness, is to refuse both health and heaven.

P. God knoweth this hath been my case. I have been my own greatest enemy, and have done more against myself

myself than all the world beside. Now I see it is not so easy to love one's own soul, as I thought. But he that will not *love God*, it is pity he should live; for God is all goodness.

M. Oh! my friend, it is far more difficult to love God than yourself. I assure you, your want of love to God is the greatest of all your sins. If there were more true love to God, there would be more title to salvation; for none that sincerely love God, shall perish. I know all men love God, as their creator and preserver. But they love him not as their holy and righteous governour, who forbiddeth sin, hateth and punisheth the ungodly, and neither forgiveth, nor saveth the impenitent. If you had truly loved God, you would have loved his word and worship, and have delighted to do his will. Did you love God, when you broke his laws, hated holiness, and treated an obedient and heavenly life as an intolerable burthen? You may as well say, that he loveth the king, who riseth up in rebellion against him. Is it not evident, that you have all your life been an enemy to God, and a hater of God?

P. But sure nobody can hate God.

M. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* If there were no enmity between God and man, what need of a mediator? And will you think so ill of God, and so well of yourself, as to conclude the enmity is only in God, and not in you? Is God an enemy to any man, that is not first an enemy to God? *God hateth all the workers of iniquity*, because they are all enemies to him, and as contrary to his holiness, as darkness is to light. Let your conscience say, were not you *a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God*? Were not your thoughts more on the world and its interests, than on God and his glory? You know what it is to love your friend, or money, or pleasure; and have you as much experienced what it is to love God? If you love him not above all, you love him not as God. If you had no enmity to a holy and heavenly

heavenly life, why did you not chuse it? And why could not the divine teachings, intreaties, and mercies invite and persuade you to it? Why were you so backward? Is this no enmity? And if you were an enemy to holiness, and to God's holy word and government, was not this enmity to God himself?

P. Never till now did I know myself an enemy to God, though I have often feared that for my sins he was an enemy to me. I now perceive that all sin hath in it some enmity against God.

M. Have you not heard how enmity was put between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent? And how soon it was manifested in the two first brethren, Cain and Abel? For Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Whence come all the cruelties of persecution, and the multiplied names of martyrs, but from this inbred enmity? Is not this the meaning of Christ's sending not peace, but a sword on earth? May we not say with Paul, on account of the wicked still hating and opposing the godly, *As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now?* What were any of us till recovered by divine grace? *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. He that will be a friend of the world, is an enemy to God. The friendship of the world is enmity to God. Those mine enemies, saith Christ, which would not that I should reach over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.* And are not worldly minds and fleshly lusts his enemies? And hath not this been your case?

P. May the Lord forgive me, and have mercy on me! It is not so easy, nor common, to love God, as I thought.

M. To love God with all thy heart, is the holy image of God on the soul, the proper fruit of the spirit, the certain evidence of our interest in divine favour, and the beginning and foretaste of heaven. To accomplish this in us, Christ came into our world, and

thereby gave the most wonderful demonstration of God's love to us, and the most powerful motive to engage us to love God. If love to God were easy and common, all goodness, and salvation itself, would be in proportion.—But what think you of *loving your neighbour*? Is that also easy to you?

P. I am angry when I am wronged or insulted, but I know no one in the world that I wish ill to.

M. So far it is well. But do you love men more for the sake of God and his image upon them, than for your own sake? Do you *love your neighbour as yourself*? An unconverted sinner maketh his inordinate self-love the standard and reason of his love to others. He loveth not those best, who are best, and most holy, and most useful; but those from whom he himself receiveth most love and honour, who agree with him in opinion, conform most intirely to his will and humour, and contribute most to his worldly interest. On the contrary, a true christian loves his neighbour, as you love the children of your dearest friend, for the sake of the parent. Have not you loved a swearer, and opposer of serious religion, if he spoke well of you, took your part, or did you some friendly offices, better than the most wise and godly person, by whom your vices had been observed and re-proved?

P. I cannot deny but you describe me rightly.

M. Did you never dishonour your superiors? Nor desire to revenge yourself upon others? Nor endeavour to deceive or injure your neighbour? Nor slander, backbite, ridicule, or falsely accuse him? Did you never envy him, nor covet his estate or honours, nor seek to undermine him? If so, what was this but sinful self-love? On the other hand, with what condescension, self-denial and diligence have you testified your love to your neighbour? What labour and expence have you been at to save the souls of perishing sinners, or to relieve their bodies? For *who so seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

How

DIALOGUE II.

27

How easily can you bear your neighbour's wrongs; or reproaches, his sickness or poverty, in comparison with your own? You can aggravate his faults, and extenuate your own; and even consign him to punishment for a crime which you overlook in yourself.

P. I must confess I have sinned against the love of God, my neighbour, and myself. And I see the necessity of a better heart.

M. On the whole, what think you now of the baptismal covenant? Can you heartily give up yourself to the father, son, and holy spirit?

P. O! Sir, I must have many a thought of it, before I shall understand it well, and many more thoughts to overcome all the backwardness of my heart. Such a work is not to be done rashly.

M. I like your answer. I hope it doth not proceed from reluctance, or an inclination to delay. What is so necessary, cannot be done too soon, if it be done well. None can *come after Christ, and be his disciple, without sitting down first, and counting the cost.*

P. But why then were thousands baptized the very same day they were converted?

M. They were *Jews*, and had been instructed in the divine law, and solemnly entered into the covenant of God, and therefore wanted no necessary knowledge, except that of the *Messiah's* being actually come, whose coming they themselves were expecting. And though their conversion and baptism were the same day, they gave sufficient evidence of a credible profession, by their humiliation, confession, and penitent desires to be acquainted with the way of salvation through Christ, in direct opposition to prevailing customs and prejudices. If you have now a distinct knowledge of the baptismal covenant, and are resolved to consent to it, and perform it, I advise you to renew it without delay.

P. I need the same preparation, profession, and covenant, as if I had never been baptized, would it not have been better to have omitted *infant-baptism*? Why should we be baptized before we believe?

C 2

M. Baptism

M. Baptism is the door of entrance into the gospel church, nor is there any precept or example for entering any other way. As for infants, they were church-members before Christ's incarnation, and he came not to destroy, but to enlarge church-privileges. Infant-church-membership doth not cease with circumcision; for during the years in the wilderness, tho' the Israelitish children were uncircumcised, yet in that interval they were expressly entered into covenant with God. Before circumcision was instituted, it appears that God ever joined the children with the parents in his promises and threatenings. When circumcision was first appointed, God made it the indispensable duty of parents to enter their infants into the covenant, nor hath it been ever reversed; and under the gospel there is no appointed way of entering into covenant, but by baptism. *Christ was much displeased, when his disciples rebuked those that brought young children to him, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God; and therefore he is still ready to receive them, whenever dedicated to him, though he did not then baptize them, because the common use of christian baptism was to begin after his death and resurrection. When the apostle telleth believing parents, that their children are holy, he must mean more than legitimate, or they could not be superior to the children of heathens. We read of apostles baptizing whole households. Indeed infant-baptism hath been the practice of the christian church in all ages. And as infants share in the visible effects of human apostacy, why should we imagine the remedy by Christ so narrow, as to exclude that period of life which is first miserable, and leave no visible way of their recovery by promise and covenant in which they are personally concerned? How could we hope for the salvation of infants without a promise?*

P. But infants cannot believe.

M. Nor do they sin actually, and yet they need a saviour. And though they believe not actually, they are the infants of professedly believing parents.

P. But

P. But what good doth it do to those that have no understanding, to be baptized?

M. It is good to have a covenant-relation to God, the father, son, and holy spirit, and a visible title to the blessings of the covenant; and if they die in infancy, to have a right to eternal life. You take a lease of lands for your child's life as well as your own, and make him a party in the contract, though without his knowledge. If he shall afterward think himself wronged, he may quit his part, whether for earth, or for heaven, whenever he please.

P. But I perceive in my own case, we should do it better, if we did it with understanding.

M. Your parents ought to have engaged you to God in covenant with understanding, though you were then incapable of it. And your former baptism doth not hinder your doing it now with the best temper of mind. All men are prone to rest in the externals of religion. Many lay too great stress on the outward washing, who do not enough consider the nature of the covenant. Though you need not repeat your baptism, yet the covenant itself is often to be renewed in the Lord's-supper. You have sinfully neglected the due consideration of your infant-baptism; but the same covenant is to be renewed upon your repentance, and will intitle you to the same benefits, though you are not rebaptized. Therefore now renew your covenant with so much the deeper humiliation, considering how long and with what aggravations you have neglected and broken it.

P. Have you any more advice on this head?

M. Yes; if you desire to be a christian indeed, let your consent be to the whole covenant, and not merely to a part. Be willing to be sanctified, as well as to be pardoned; and to be saved from the love and practice, as well as the punishment of sin. Take God, and Christ, and heaven for your compleat happiness, and cleave to it, though you should meet with ever so much tribulation in the present world. Make no se-

eret exception or reserve in favour of any one sin. Do all this immediately and without delay. And I hope it will not be long before you come to me again, and let me know your resolution.

DIALOGUE III.

The Minister answereth a variety of objections against a holy and heavenly life brought to prejudices the Parishioner's mind by a gay Gentleman of his acquaintance.

Minister. **W**ELCOME, neighbour; I did not expect you so soon. Now let me know the result of our last conversation.

Parishioner. Since I saw you, I have had some talk with my landlord, Sir E—— D——, who you know is a gentleman of great learning, and he so much opposeth all you have said, that I am in doubt; and have prevailed upon him to come with me, that I may know which of you is in the right.

M. Desire the gentleman to come in.

Gentleman. You may well wonder, Sir, at seeing me this morning. But I find your talk hath disturbed my honest tenant, that he is scarce fit for work or play. I wish there was less noise about religion.

M. Why should it be thought strange, to have a man's thoughts trouble him, after he hath long been neglecting his own happiness?

G. I never heard of this man's saying or doing any harm. He hath minded his business, gone to church, lived quietly in the parish; and now you make him doubt of his salvation.

M. Sir,

M. Sir, I wish no man to doubt of his salvation without cause, nor would I have any man presume. The saving or losing the soul for ever is a grand affair. But God is the judge, and not you, or I. His word is the rule of his judgment, and plainly telleth us whom he will save. I have done no more with this man, than enquire how it is with his soul, and set the word of God before him, that thereby he may form a judgment of his own state.

G. Can it mend any man, to cast him into terrors? Is not hoping well the way to salvation?

M. It is not well, to believe and hope falsely. He that neither knoweth, nor seareth a danger, will not avoid it. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* We are commanded to *fear him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; and to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.* Were a physician to tell his patient the danger of his case, if he doth not take his prescriptions, and you should say there is no danger; which is the patient's friend? I encourage his rational, and you his false hopes.

G. When you should draw men to believe, you drive them to doubting and unbelief.

M. There is no word of God promiseth salvation to the ungodly. Believing that we shall be saved, doth not prove it. It is vain for your tenant to believe he hath paid you your rent, if he hath no receipt to produce. Christ will pardon and save all sincere believers; and to doubt of this, is sinful. But we may doubt of our own sincerity.

G. If poor men hearken to all you say, you will drive them to despair at last.

M. We teach them how to prevent everlasting despair. When Christ declared, *Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;* would you have said, it leadeth to despair, and is not

to be believed? Did the devil preach better than God; when he contradicted the divine declaration to *Eve*, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die*; but told her, *Thou shalt not surely die*? Till men despair of being saved without holiness, they will never seek heaven in the appointed way.

G. Christ came to abolish the law, and set up the gospel; and therefore mercy better becometh the lip of a gospel-preacher.

M. Repentance and conversion are gospel-mercies. The law knoweth no place for repentance. As gospel ministers, we intreat men to accept of mercy, and neither refuse, nor abuse it. Pray, Sir, what mercy would you preach, if you were a minister?

G. I would tell men of God's mercy, and that it is greater than all their sins, and that Christ died for sinners, and to save all that believe.

M. God hath said, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. We preach the mercy of God, and the merits of Christ; but we also add, that if men reject Christ and mercy, they will increase their own misery. Would you promise them salvation without bringing forth fruits meet for repentance?

G. I would tell them that a quiet and sober religion will be accepted, and that the noise you make, fills their minds with needless perplexity.

M. O! Sir, it is the voice of God himself, *There is no peace to the wicked; they have seduced my people, saying, peace, and there was no peace. When they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape*. If sin be the way of peace, why did it drown the old world? Why did it crucify Christ? Why doth it expose to eternal damnation? Can you in your conscience be persuaded, that a truly godly man, who hath chiefly been laying up treasure in heaven, is not more likely to die in peace, than one whose life hath been spent in sin and folly? And is not that the best way to live in peace, which will render

der death most peaceful? Where then is the quiet and sober religion you talk of?

G. The religion I mean, is, to love God and my neighbour, and do as I would be done by, and go to church, and say my prayers; and when I have sinned, repent, and cry for mercy, and trust in Christ, and to be quiet, and give myself no farther trouble.

M. You have said a great deal in a few words. But saying this will not save us, except we do it. If you *love God*, you will love his laws and government, his service and servants, you will love to please him, and desire to be with him, and will delight more in his presence than in all the pleasures of this world. You cannot think that man loveth you, who careth not how far he is from you, nor how little he hath to do with you. Love to God is to keep his commandments, and not treating sin as your greatest pleasure, and obedience to God as your greatest pain, and the word and worship of God as the great troubler of the world. — If you *love your neighbour as yourself*, you will not grind the poor, nor rack your tenants, nor lay out hundreds, and thousands in sports and amusements, in pomp and pageantry, in dissipation and riot. You will not see your brother have need, and shut up your bowels of compassion from him, and still say, you love God and your neighbour. You will not hate and vilify the faithful servants of God, and yet pretend to love God and them. Nor will you fancy it a loving your neighbour as yourself, when you feel a fondness for your companions in vice. — As for your *repenting when you have sinned, and crying for mercy*, I hope you do not mean to mock God, with saying you repent, when you do not; and wishing you had not sinned, but still go on, and do the same; crying for mercy, but still living in debauchery and impiety, and hating those that testify against it. True repentance changeth all the mind, will, and conversation. To this only I have been persuading my neighbour, though you say I have troubled him and broke his peace.

C.S.

G. You

G. You treat me, Sir, with a truly priest-like insolence. Under pretence of reproving sin you assume a liberty of reproaching characters.

M. I knew, Sir, on what disadvantage I should discourse with you; but I do it for the sake of this poor man, who desired it. I am persuaded, on any other subject, you would make no complaint of my disrespect. Why should you expect me to conceal the truth of God for fear of mortal man?

G. You would have rich and poor live all alike, and we must submit to make the same appearance as they do, and have as little self-enjoyment.

M. No, Sir; but death will soon level you with common dust, and then, *whose shall these things be which you possess?* Tho' you are not called to share with the poor in their present inconveniencies and afflictions, yet it is necessary for you, according to your situation, to labour as diligently, and be as mortified and self-denying, as they. Wealth is no just apology for, though a powerful temptation to, idleness and luxury.—But give me leave, Sir, to ask, what there is in my doctrine, which you think so troublesome to my neighbour?

G. It disquieteth men's consciences.

M. But in what respect doth my doctrine tend to excite a false alarm in the minds of men?

G. You would have them believe that God made us to damn us, contrary to his mercies.

M. If we believe the word of God, we must conclude, that some will be damned for their sins. But tell me, Sir, if I deny salvation, where God hath promised it.

G. You confine religion to a small party; and how empty will heaven be, if all are excluded, whom you please to censure and condemn?

M. If the party you refer to, be that which scripture calleth believers and penitent, regenerate and holy, you must yourself believe that promises of salvation are made to none but such. All the world is of two parties; the godly, and the ungodly. Christ expressly
and

and earnestly confineth salvation to them, who are *born again of the spirit*, and are *converted*; and *lay up treasures in heaven*, so as to have their heart there also; and who *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. St. Paul confineth it to them who are *new creatures*; and *have the spirit of Christ*; and *mind the things of the spirit*; and *mortify the lusts of the flesh*; and who *have their conversation in heaven*. Are these the words of man, or of God?

G. You quote the word of God in contradiction to the goodness of his nature. How incredib'le, that a few party-names should be on the list of salvation, and all the rest of the world be damned!

M. There hath been no age, in which terms of reproach were not invented in order to render the most faithful servants of God, either ridiculous, or odious. But every prudent man will distinguish between names and things. *Blessed*, saith Christ to his disciples, *are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake*. They, of whom the world was not worthy, had trial of cruel mockings. But for the sake of heaven, who would not patiently be derided by those who are themselves hastening to hell?—Instead of being offended, that God should save none but those, however few they are, who love him, and mind heaven more than carnal pleasure and worldly prosperity; you had better lay your hand upon your heart, and examine yourself. Will you tell God, that he hath made a law, which is contrary to the goodness of his nature? Is it contrary to the goodness of God, to exclude those from heaven, who refuse it, or prefer any vile lust before it? And is not God just, as well as good? Is it contrary to the goodness of the king to hang a thief or murderer? And were there many such, must they therefore be unpunished? If God saved a thousand or ten thousand for one that he condemneth, are you sure it would consist with his goodness? And if ten thousand to one in this wicked world were damned, perhaps it would not amount to one in many millions of the holy

and happy in the rest of the creation. But while we are so ignorant of these things, how very unfit are we to quarrel with God about them!

G. This is saying something; but it is no justification of your arrogantly claiming heaven before your neighbours. We are all as you think, prophane and ungodly people, and you say to us, *Stand by, I am holier than thou*; and even treat us, as the pharisee did the publican, *I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican*.

M. If any arrogate the name of holiness, without the thing, he is an hypocrite. If you have real godliness, you are the child of God, and the heir of heaven, as well as any others. The godly and the wicked are not all alike. And must he that hath the grace of God be unthankful for it? These are like the unhumiliated pharisee, who thank God for the grace they have not, and not they that humbly thank him for what they have.

G. You are the true off-spring of the pharisees, a pack of godly hypocrites, *a generation pure in your own eyes, but not cleansed from your filchings*; in secret you are as bad as any others.

M. Who do you mean, Sir?

G. I mean all or most of you that pretend to be so religious above other men.

M. Would you have us drunkards, swearers, fornicators, for fear of being hypocrites? Would you have no man profess himself a christian, or a servant of God? If you profess yourself to be a real christian, are you therefore an hypocrite? You profess christianity, and I profess no more. Our consciences and lives must tell, which of us is the hypocrite. Many that fear God, are so far from being *pure in their own eyes*, that the greatness of their sins is their continual burthen, and they are ready to conclude themselves hypocrites.—But how come you to know our hypocrisy, and what we are in secret? If you know it, it is not secret: If it be secret, you know it not. If our lives be vicious, prove it; and admonish us. If not, how do

do you know our hearts are vicious? Is not God the only searcher of hearts?—I am glad, indeed, if you hate hypocrisy. The hypocrite is one who professeth to be what he is not. Need I ask you, which is the hypocrite, he who hateth all known sin, and *seeks* God diligently; or he who lieth in drunkenness, fornication, and all sensuality, and maketh a jest of serious piety, and treateth the faithful servants of Christ as persons that are *righteous overmuch*?

G. Are not all men sinners? And doth not he *deceive himself*, who saith he hath no sin? Why then do you make such a wide difference between yourselves and others?

M. But, Sir, are there not sinners that shall be saved in heaven, and sinners that shall go to hell? Sinners that are, and others that are not pardoned? And is not this because there are sinners that are penitent and truly converted, and others that are not so? Some sinners that *make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*, and others that strive to mortify such lusts? Were they not all sinners, to whom Christ distinguishingly said, *Come ye blessed, and ye cursed*?

G. The difference is, that you are the pharisees, and we are the publicans; you *justify yourselves*, and we *smite on our breasts*, saying, *God be merciful to us sinners*! And which of these was justified of God?

M. Do you think, Sir, Christ meant a dissembling publican, who only repented in pretence? Doth God justify hypocrites? Or was it not a sincere penitent, who confessed his sins, and went home with a new heart and life? And is not this all I am persuading your tenant to? If you yourself be this publican, *Go and do likewise*. As for the pharisees, they set up the traditions of men against the word of God, and made religion consist in mere ceremonies. They drew near to God with their lips, when their hearts were far from him; and were strict in tithing mint, anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth. They built the tombs of the prophets, and

and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous, while they were the great persecutors of Christ and his apostles.

G. They devoured *widows' houses*, and for a pretence made long prayers; and so do you.

M. Tell me what *widows' houses* I have devoured, and I promise your worship to make speedy restitution. As for long prayers, was it the length, or the false pretence, which Christ reproved? If the length, why did Christ himself continue all night in prayer? And why are we bid to pray without ceasing?

G. No, Christ blameth the false pretence.

M. And is it not a proof that long prayer is good and laudable, when it is not made a cloke for sin, and particularly for covetousness and oppression?

G. You are noted for being a covetous sort of people; You will not swear, but you will lie.

M. We constantly declare, Sir, that liars are not in a state of salvation. You must prove it against the persons whom you accuse. When we know of such, we labour to bring them to repentance.

G. There are many villanies committed secretly among you. I appeal to the conduct of some of your professors of religion, who have lately been charged with great wickedness; and you are all alike.

M. If they sin secretly, they are hypocrites; whom we endeavour to convince and convert, as persons in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. If they were serious christians, and have fallen into some open and enormous crimes, and have truly repented, I ask, whether one sin with repentance, is as bad as a life of sin without repentance? But wherever you, Sir, as a magistrate, shall find among us any scandals of a christian profession, and prove the facts, you shall have our best help and thanks.

G. You would fain seem perfect, and without sin.

M. Every godly man is so humbled in the sense of his sins, that he loathes himself in his own sight, and daily confesseth his sins with grief and shame. Why do we exhort others to sincere repentance, if we ourselves

selves are not convinced of its importance, and desirous to have it for our own temper?

G. You have God, and Christ, and heaven, and scripture in your mouths; but the devil is in your hearts. And there are among you so many different opinions, that a man may sooner lose his senses by attending to you, than become a good christian.

M. I wish my *parishioner* would carefully consider both your objections, and my answers. Certainly our opinions may differ, when our religion is the same. Perhaps there are not two men in the world of the same opinion in every thing. A true christian desireth the unity, peace and concord of all his brethren in Christ; as to opinion, he followeth the right, as far as he can understand it; but in doubtful things he carefully avoideth divisions, sects, or parties. And since you, Sir, are not against all religion, permit me to ask what you are against?

G. I am against being *righteous overmuch*, making men believe they cannot be saved without such strict holiness, and driving them out of their senses. Why not be moderate in religion, and live as our neighbours do, and as our fore-fathers have done? What! Are they all damned? Will you be wiser than all the world? Moderation is good in all things.

M. To be *righteous overmuch*, in its most obvious meaning, is to be stricter than God would have us, by devising a righteousness of our own. A pretended exactness is no duty, but a great hinderance of duty. As when the usefulness of a sermon is destroyed by the excessive nicety of its composition. Or when *sacrifice* is preferred before *mercy*. We desire not to *make men believe* any thing but the word of God. Will it save men to be unbelievers? Instead of *driving men out of their senses*, we labour to restore them to their right minds; as when the prodigal son *came to himself*, and returned to his father. We take that man to be worse than mad, who will sell his soul for sinful pleasure. We are no friends to melancholy, because it is unfavourable to the joyful life of a sincere believer. But

we

we with men to have so much fear of God, and of sin and hell, as to keep them in the way of holiness and heaven. *Wisdom is justified of her children.* As for moderation, we esteem it a valuable fruit and effect of prudence, and we are real enemies to imprudent and irregular zeal. But because you imagine, Sir, that a *godly, righteous, and sober life* is an excess in religion, let me intreat you to consider the following questions. Is it possible to love God too much, to please him too well, and obey him too accurately? Hath God made any laws that are not fit to be obeyed? Can you give God more than his own, or more true and faithful service than he deserveth? Are you afraid of doing too much for eternal life? Is he hinders who doth not desire to be perfect; or can he really love holiness, who doth not desire to be more holy? When we are commanded, to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, did not God know what he said, or are you wiser than God? Is any man, when he is dying, troubled with too much holiness, or too little? Did you ever know any man so holy and good, as not earnestly desire to be better? Is not sin the greatest plague in the world, and the grand troubler of persons and families, of churches and kingdoms? Would it not be happy if there were no sin, and *the will of God was done on earth, as it is done in heaven*? What have you to mind in this world, that deserveth your greatest care and labour, comparable to the pleasing God, and saving your soul? While the men of the world think and talk, contrive and labour only for worldly things, have not the godly a thousand times greater motives to be as early and late, as constant and unwearied, alone or in company, in thinking and talking of their God and saviour, and in *working out their own salvation*? “O Lord, pardon our slothfulness in
 “doing so little, and we will cheerfully bear any reproaches for doing so much! Thou art my portion,
 “my first and last, my only trust, my eternal all! O
 “leave me not to a disaffected, lifeless, unholy and un-

“believing heart, to a carnal, worldly, selfish mind;
 “to live and die a stranger to my God, my saviour,
 “and the church triumphant in heavenly glory; and
 “then I will never join with the accusers of thy *real*
 “*sonable* and delightful *service* nor ask one taste of
 “*sin's* deceitful pleasures!”

G. Here is rapture and enthusiasm!—But when you have done all, pray, S. I, what need is there of so many sermons and prayers, as if God were moved with our talk? I can say all in these three words, *Think well, say well, and do well.*

M. Indeed, Sir, it is quickly said; and if rightly understood, it is that only to which I have been persuading your *reason*, and which you have all this while been opposing. Let us but faithfully labour to *think, say, and do well*, and sincerely repent that ever we thought, said, or did otherwise, and trust in Christ for pardon and help, and then we are perfectly agreed. But there is a wide difference between *well* and *ill*. That only is well, which God commandeth, whether we approve it or not. Though *sermons* and *prayers* are not to move God, yet we need them, and many of them, to move ourselves. Holy desires in prayer are excited by exercise. What can be more reasonable than *ask* and *have*? He that doth not value mercy, will neither relish it well, nor use it well. There is an admirable co operation between the graces of God, and our holy and importunate desires. Like the concurrence of sight with the eye in producing light, we are receiving grace as long as we are desiring it. Besides, prayer is part of the homage we owe to the great benefactor of the world. Can our thoughts, affections, or words be employed on a nobler theme, than our blessed saviour, our glorious God, our heavenly joys? Why should such work be ever counted a weariness? Would you have us be afraid of heaven, as if it were a house of correction? If you can feast and game, see plays, and read romances, and never think the time long, excuse us in our numerous sermons and prayers. I wish you had felt but one hour, what some of God's people have.

have enjoyed in hearing of their glorious Lord, and in praying to him, and praising him.

G. It hath ever been the custom of hypocrites to place their religion in words and looks; but where are your good works? You are as covetous as any.

M. Our doctrine is, to *love our neighbour as ourselves, to honour God with our substance, and devote all we have to him; that we are created in Christ Jesus to good works, and must do good to all men, especially the household of faith; that whatever we do or deny to the members of Christ, is done or denied to Christ himself; and that we must not forget to do good and to communicate, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased. We judge it necessary to labour in our callings, that we may have to give to him that needeth; and not to waste our Lord's goods in sensuality or superfluity, but to feed, clothe, and instruct the poor, and have our accounts always ready.*

G. Good words! but where are the deeds?

M. If men live not as they profess, blame not their profession, but their lives. He that liveth contrary to his profession, tormenteth his own conscience, and publisheth his own shame. Whenever I have made a collection for any real work of charity, I have observed the devout and religious have contributed much more freely and largely in proportion to their substance, than others. Though, I doubt not, some men have much liberality, while they have but little religion. I beseech you to consider what your own works are, and how they will appear at the great day. Your's will be a dreadful account, if it should then be found, that you have lavished away your thousands on horses, dogs, and sports, and in various forms of pride and pomp, of luxury and debauchery; while very little was employed for pious and charitable purposes. God grant it may never be said of you, *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness!* —

G. I will talk no longer with you. You think to make me tremble with Felix, by this face of reason which you put on your religion.

M. Sir,

M. Sir, had you denied the *scripture*, or the *life to come*, or the *immortality of the soul*, I would have reasoned with you in a different manner. But as you profess yourself a christian, I ask this one question, whether, supposing your *tenant* had never been baptized, you would now advise him to it or not?

G. I would have him a christian.

M. And would you have him understand the nature of the baptismal-engagement?

G. I would have him behave like a man.

M. Would you have him serious and sincere?

G. Do you think I am for making a jest of christianity, or for dissembling in it?

M. Come then, my *parishioner*, observe what your *landlord* would have you do, and I desire no more. With understanding and seriousness renew your baptismal-covenant. But for your better assistance I give it you in writing, that you may take it home with you, and consider it carefully, and come to a deliberate and stedfast resolution. I will just read it, that your *landlord* may object, if there be any thing in it that displeaseth him. — "I believe in God the father, son, and holy spirit; and heartily repenting of my sinful life, I desire now to give up myself, with all my heart and soul, to my reconciled God and father, to my saviour and lord, my sanctifier and comforter; renouncing the devil, the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh; taking up my cross, and denying myself, and following Christ even to death, that I may live with him in heavenly glory."

G. I cannot object against any thing you have read without objecting to christianity itself. God make us all better christians; for I perceive we are not what we promised to be! I have been opposing you all this while, but I find my heart is against *practical christianity*. I wish I had not talked with you; for you have disquieted my mind. *Serious religion is necessary*. But if I must repent, there is no halter.

DIALOGUE IV.

The Minister hath the pleasure to see his Parishioner resolved for a life of serious godliness.

Minister. W E E L C O M E, neighbour, I expected to see you long ago.

Parishioner. O! Sir, I have been greatly afflicted. We have had a violent fever among us. My landlord, Sir E — D — —, is dead, and the servant that waited upon him, when you talked with him.

M. I am very sorry to hear it. Pray what was his temper of mind on a death-bed?

P. He told me, he thought you honest, and that you had more to say for your religion than he expected. He acknowledged you had scripture on your side. He expressed a greater liking to the *Papists*, because he said they did not regard the scripture so much, and when a man hath sinned, if he confess to the priest, they absolve him. Rather than live so strict a life, he seemed willing to think the scripture was not the word of God.

M. It is melancholy to see how the heart of man rebelleth against the law and grace of God! As for the *Papists*, I assure you they confess all the scriptures to be the word of God, nor will they deny any thing I have urged upon you. Indeed they take some books into the canon of scripture which we think *apocryphal*, and also add a great deal more, which they call *tradition*, consisting so much in words and *bodily exercise*, that the enemies of strict godliness easily turn *Papists*. They allow their *absolutions* are not effectual without true repentance. And when their *priests* flatter the presumption and false hopes of gross sinners, by absolving them as often as they confess their sins, it is but to answer their own covetous designs. I cannot see how a man that believeth the scripture, can allow
himself

himself in ungodliness; for his belief must convert, or torment him.

P. I am sure my *landlord* had some convictions upon his conscience, which greatly troubled him. When he was first taken ill, every body told him there was no danger; and so he was kept from talking about his soul and eternity, till the fever took away his senses. Twice or thrice he came to himself, and then his *chaplain* advised him to lift up his heart to God, and believe in Christ, for he was going to a place of joy, and angels were ready to receive his soul. But Sir E—— D—— looked at him with a dreadful countenance, and said, “Away flatterer, you have betrayed my soul. Too late! Too late!” And he trembled so much that the bed shook under him.

M. How did his servant die?

P. O quite in another manner! He heard in the next room all the talk between his master and you, and no doubt was convinced: but he went on in his former course till his sickness, and then was in great terror, especially when he heard of his master's death. He often talked of you, and wished to see you, but nobody would hear of sending for you. Methinks I still hear how he cried out, “O my madness! O my sinful life! What will become of my miserable soul? O that I had again the time I have lost! Would God but try me once more, I would lead a new life, and despise all the scoffs of fools, and all the temptations of the world.”

M. What hath been your temper, and how did your master's conversation with me affect you?

P. I thought the revilers of godliness had some sense in what they said. But I soon saw their folly.

M. It must be folly to talk against the wisdom of God, and the interest and happiness of our own souls.

P. I could not remain any longer in doubt, when he was obliged to submit to your argument.

M. What have you since resolved upon?

P. I went home convinced that I must become a *new creature*, or be undone. I read over again and again
the

the baptismal covenant, which you were so kind as to write for me. I often conversed with that pious neighbour you mentioned to me. But my worldly business, family-cares, the temptations of my old acquaintance, and my fondness for sinful pleasures, made me delay my repentance. Then the fever seized me; and carried off Sir E—— D—— and his servant, and I became resolute to delay no longer.

M. O how unreasonable to delay when you are once convinced! What! delay to fly from the guilt of sin, the bondage of the devil, and the wrath of God! How brittle is our mortal frame, and how wonderful that we live! Is the state of a sinner so safe or happy, that any should be unwilling to leave it? Are God, and Christ, and heaven so bad, that any should delay to be godly? Can you too soon be a child of God, and escape damnation? How do you know but the spirit of God may leave you to the counsel of your own will? Doth not every sinful delay grieve the spirit, harden your own heart, and make your conversion more difficult? Would you a little longer despise and injure a precious saviour, and a little longer please the devil? Believe it, satan doth not trifle; time standeth not still. God needeth not you, but you need him. You would not have God delay to help you in your pain and sickness. But divine patience will not be abused for ever. *Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!*

P. Sir, I thank you for shewing me the sin and danger of delays. But I was telling you how God hath already determined me, I hope, against delaying any longer. When I thought my death was near, then all my sins, and all your counsels came into my mind, and I was overwhelmed with the fear of God's displeasure. I thought I had but a few days to be out of hell. And O! what would I have given for assurance of pardon through Jesus Christ, and for a little more time to prepare for eternity? Never till then did I so thoroughly see the evil of sin, the wrath of God, my need of a saviour, the worth of time, and the folly of delays. Now,
Sir,

Sir, as God hath raised me up from a bed of sickness, I come to tell you my resolution, and ask your further advice.

M. Afflictions are not the least of God's mercies. His rod is kindly added to his word, to fix our attention, and soften our hearts.—I again advise you, to consider, and understand, your baptismal covenant.

P. Suffer me to mention some of my doubts, which seem to hinder my covenanting with God. What must I trust to for the pardon of sin, and which way, and on what terms, may I be sure of it?

M. Trust to the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ alone, which the mercy of God hath made the meritorious cause of your forgiveness and acceptance, your sanctification and salvation. Give up yourself to God the father, son, and holy spirit, in the covenant of baptism, repenting of sin, and turning to God by Jesus Christ. If you do so, God giveth you a right and title to Christ, and to all the blessings of grace now, and glory for ever.

P. I have been a great sinner. I neglected my soul, prophaned the Lord's-day, was a drunkard, a fornicator, and even a thief; for when I was a servant, I wronged my master. And may all my sins be pardoned, though so many and so great?

M. All sins are pardoned to the sincerely penitent and believing. But no sin is pardoned, where there is no true repentance and faith. A sincere christian need not doubt the pardon of his past sins.

P. I fear I shall sin again, and how must I get pardon in time to come? I have heard that baptism washeth away all sins; but though I was long ago baptized, I am yet very imperfect.

M. Baptism is said to *wash away sin*, as it containeth that covenant, which secureth pardon, through the blood of Christ, to all that sincerely repent and believe. If any be ungodly after baptism, they are by the same covenant freely forgiven, whenever they turn to God by repentance and faith.

P. How

P. How must I obtain grace and strength to keep my covenant engagements?

M. You must not only go to God through Christ for pardoning *mercy*, but also to *find grace to help in time of need*. *Without Christ you can do nothing*. But you can do all things through Christ strengthening you. The holy spirit will enlighten your understanding, renew your will and affections, and animate your whole soul with heavenly love; you must cherish his motions, and not *resist*, or *grieve* him.

P. What must I do to get, keep, and obey the holy spirit, and enjoy the blessings communicated by him?

M. Remember, that the giving or denying the aids of the spirit to our souls, are the greatest rewards or punishments administered by Christ in the present world. Wait on the Lord in the exercise of faith, and the humble and diligent use of divine worship, which Christ hath appointed.

P. But I am afraid, I have been guilty of that sin against the holy spirit, which is unpardonable. For I have prophaneely derided the spirit and its influences, and those who pleaded for them.

M. Every sin against the holy spirit is not unpardonable; but only the blasphemy of infidels, who, when they cannot deny the miracles of Christ, maintain that he wrought them by the power of the devil. So that the unpardonable sin belongeth to none but infidels, and to but few of them.

P. How may I know that I have the spirit, so as to distinguish his influences from delusions?

M. You may be assured that the influences of the holy spirit will only lead to God and holiness, always agreeing with the word of God, and producing in us the knowledge, life and love of God.

P. May I venture to covenant with God, when I am very uncertain whether or no my heart be sincere?

M. It is necessary to your salvation to be sincere, but not to know your own sincerity. All that God expecteth from us in our engagements with him, is, that

that we speak our own minds, according to the best self-acquaintance we can get; otherwise a great part of our worship must be omitted for want of knowing the sincerity of our own hearts.

P. What if my heart should not be sincere, and I should afterward fall away?

M. If your heart in covenanting with God be insincere, you will continue in your sin and misery without pardon and acceptance, till you have sincerity. If you fall into any particular sin, you must be restored again by repenting and believing, as if you had never repented and believed before. But, as you love God and your own soul, take heed of wilful and presumptuous sins.

P. My heart is so deceitful, and I am so much intangled with bad company, and worldly sinners, that I fear my resolutions will all be broken.

M. You must fear it, in order to prevent it. But this fear should not hinder your covenant-engagements. You know sin is odious, and its pleasures deceitful and poisonous, and that nothing in this world is worthy to rival God, and Christ, and your own salvation. God will have you renounce the world, as your portion and happiness; and at the same time he will give it you, as your daily provision for his service, and a blessed means of promoting your salvation. And it is blessedness indeed, to see God in every creature comfort, and sincerely thank him for it, and faithfully employ it in his service. A few pence thus improved, will be better than thousands of pounds, abused in *serviug diuery lusts and pleasures*. You will experience greater pleasures in the service of God, which will enable you to hate what you formerly loved. You will have the example and converse of God's people to direct and animate you, and abundant help from all his holy ordinances. You will especially be planted into Christ, and *receiue of his spirit*, and *his grace will be sufficient for you*, for *his strength will be made perfect in your weakness*. Your resolution is absolutely necessary. You must resolve, or perish for ever. You must chuse

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God and Christ, holiness and heaven, *rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Till you firmly resolve, you are not a christian indeed.

P. But I have so long been accustomed to a vain, careless life, that I fear I shall soon be weary of strict godliness, and shall never be able to hold out.

M. I tell you again, if you conceive of the life you must turn to, as melancholy and burthensome, you are mistaken. There is no life in the world so safe, honourable, and profitable, or that yieldeth such manly pleasure. Your repenting of sin with shame and godly sorrow, only fitteth you for the comforts of pardoning and healing grace. Your faith will be fixed on precious promises; on the love of Christ; on the gracious constitution of his covenant; on the love of the father in giving us his son, in reconciling us to himself, in adopting us into his family, and in bestowing upon us his holy spirit. You will always live under the sanctifying and comforting influences of the spirit of God, making you more like God, and helping your infirmities in every duty and against every temptation. You will have lively hopes and desires after eternal happiness. In all your afflictions, or persecutions, and even in death itself, you will have divine comforts, and the hopes of glory, for your constant cordials; you will live in the communion of saints, hear the glad tidings of the gospel, fervently pray for more grace, joyfully give thanks for innumerable mercies, be elevated in the praises of God, feast on your saviour's flesh and blood, and often be renewing your covenant, and receiving the fresh seals of forgiveness, and new degrees of spiritual life, and strength, and joy. What is there in all this, that a man should be weary of it? Is not *godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come?*

P. You tell me of another kind of godliness than I thought of; I was afraid of its being a melancholy life, as I saw it in many that professed it.

M. I have already told you why some are melancholy. Many in the beginning of their conversion,
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Wise their convictions, instead of freely disclosing them, and prevent their own instruction and consolation.

P. I desire to be thankful for the grace of God, and your good advice. I am resolved to *join myself to the Lord in a perpetual covenant not to be forgotten.*

M. I will go home with you and try whether you and I can instruct all your family, and bring them to the same resolution. God hath often blessed his penitent and believing servants with the conversion also of their households, as in the families of *Cornelius the Roman centurion, Lydia, and the Jailor at Philippi*, and many others. It will be a great mercy to you, if God give you a family willing to go along with you in the way to heaven, and daily joining with you in his worship and fear.

P. O! Sir, I bless God that *this day salvation is come to my house.* In the presence of my family I lament my sinful life, and desire and resolve henceforward to engage myself and them to be the Lord's. Is there any thing else you would advise me to?

M. I would have you take the first opportunity of receiving the *Lord's-supper*, as a publick renewal of your baptismal-covenant. Do your utmost to evidence to your fellow-communicants, by all your temper and conversation, your sincere repentance for your past sinful life, your earnest desire of their prayers for you, and tender watchfulness over you, your willingness to receive their faithful admonitions, and your ardent concern to glorify God by warning others to take heed of violating their covenant-vows in baptism, and at the Lord's-table.

P. I shall be glad to be admitted to publick communion; but I fear it will not be attended with the fruits you mention, nor do I perceive all these are necessary.

M. They that *were baptized by John, confessed their sins.* They that *were pricked in their heart, on the day of pentecost, cried out men and brethren, what shall we do?* Other converts *confessed, and shewed their deeds* publickly, and to their no small expence. You were publickly baptized, and have as publickly sinned a-

gainst that covenant, and therefore should make your repentance publick. You are obliged to honour God, and should do it as publickly, as you ever dishonoured him. Sin hath shamefully deceived and defiled you, and why should not your repentance be expressed with open shame? You have encouraged others to sin, and why should you not now labour to undo the hurt you have done, beseeching them to repent with you, as they sinned with you? Serious christians were grieved with your past profaneness and impiety; and the more manifest your conversion is, the greater will be their rejoicing for you, and love to you. You yourself will have the more abundant comfort, in proportion to the clearer proofs of your own sincerity, not only in the secret, but the publick fruits and effects of your faith and repentance.

P. You have said more to satisfy me on this head, than I could have imagined. Do you mean this of every person that partakes of the *Lord's supper*?

M. I acknowledge there are some, whose piety began in childhood, who by undiscerned degrees have advanced in a divine life, and have never openly violated their baptismal covenant, though chargeable with secret sins, for which they have had secret and sincere repentance. The more distinguishing your case is, your fellow-communicants will be so much the more frequent and fervent in praying for your confirmation and perseverance, and that you may *adorn the doctrine of God our saviour in all things*, by living as a member of Christ, in the communion of saints, and no more return to your ungodly sinful life.—As soon as you please, I shall be glad to see you again, and to give you any further assistance, as God shall enable me. In the mean time, you may do as the noble *Ethiopian* convert did, *go on your way rejoicing* in this, that you are united to Christ, and are justified in the sight of God from all your former sins, and are sincerely engaged in the covenant of God, being no more a stranger and foreigner, but a fellow-citizen with the saints, and

and of the household of God, even an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, according to the hope of eternal life.

DIALOGUE V.

The Minister guardeth his Parishioner against the temptations he will meet with in his attachment to serious godliness.

Minister. **M**Y good neighbour, how is it now?
Parishioner. O! dear Sir, since I repented, and both privately and publicly gave up myself to my God, and saviour, and sanctifier, I find myself, as it were in a new world. I have had more comfort in seeking God, than ever I had in the pleasures of sin. It grieveth me, that I should spend so much of my life in wickedness. I am ashamed, that such foolish trifles should keep my heart so long from Christ and holiness. O that I had lived all my time in poverty or slavery, rather than in abominable lusts! Had I not now a merciful God, an all-sufficient saviour, a divine comforter, and a covenant of grace, what should I do? I am amazed to think of the dangerous state I was in so long! What would have become of me, if God had cut me off in my sins? O that I had sooner turned to God and holiness! But *my soul doth now magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my saviour. For where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded.*

M. Blessed be God, for the taste you have had of his goodness. It is comparatively small to what, I trust, you shall have in due time. You are entered upon the happiest life in the world. Yet I must tell you, the christian life is in scripture called *a race and a warfare*. They are the conquerors, who *have fought*

a good fight. They are crowned with glory who *press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Be not surprized, while I point out the temptations you are likely to meet with. I have no other design, but to put you on your guard, that you may escape every snare, and overcome in every conflict.

P. I have already found your advice so good, that I am persuaded you will farther suggest to me what I most need. And as I am yet in a tempting world, I have a great desire to know my particular dangers.

M. It is highly probable your *first* danger will arise from *dubting your own sincerity.* You may be tempted to think your conversion was not true, because you had no more brokenness of heart for sin; or because you could not determine the exact time when you were converted. Satan may lead you to conclude, that all religion consisteth in weeping and mourning; or that you have no grace, because you have not such a lively sense of things invisible, as of things that are seen; or because you sometimes think and talk of the world, and not always of God, and Christ, and heaven; or because you are not employed in meditation and prayer beyond your real opportunities and capacities. Thus the enemy of souls will labour, by mistaken doubts and fears, to make you melancholy; and will often tell you, all your religion hath been hypocrisy, that none of your sins are forgiven, that God is your enemy, that Christ himself hath *cast you out*, that you have sinned against the holy spirit, and that the day of grace is gone from you. In all this he will have the greater advantage against you, because the full discovery of your sincerity requirerh much self-acquaintance, and a very diligent use of the means which God hath appointed and provided.

P. This is the more likely because I feel some beginnings of it; but what must I do to prevent it?

M. Be ever attentive to your baptismal-covenant, so as thoroughly to understand it; and go no farther for evidences of your conversion, than to your renewing
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that covenant by renewed acts of repentance and faith. Study to please God, and *abound in the fruits of righteousness*; resolve most against the very sins which make you question your sincerity; and by labouring to *grow in grace, and in the practical knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ*, you will have the witness in yourself, that you *are born of God*.

P. I thank you, Sir, for this short and full direction. Please to mention another danger.

M. Next to doubting your own sincerity, you will perhaps find yourself tempted to the opposite extreme of *security*. Satan will tell you, now you are converted, all is sure; you have nothing to fear; having true grace, you can never lose it; being once pardoned, you can never be unpardoned. If he can, he will soon destroy your zeal and diligence.

P. I thought I had now no more need to fear.

M. So far as *fear hath torment* you should resist it; but you will need, as long as you live, that kind of fear which leadeth to repentance and christian watchfulness. You will always be exposed to satan's rage, to the snares of prosperity and adversity, and to many inbred lusts and corruptions. You promise in the covenant; but who is rewarded for mere promises? When a soldier is listed, he must also watch and fight. We must not only believe that God is, but that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Though it is God which worketh in us, both to will, and to do; yet we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Christ doth not take us into his army, vineyard, and family to be careless and slothful. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.

P. Happy is the man that in this respect, feareth always!

M. But remember this; your most dangerous temptation will be to *sen uality, pride, and covetousness*. He that seriously thinketh on the grave, and the awful change which is there made in all the comeliness of mortal flesh, and how short and precarious our life is;

and what a dreadful thing it will be, for a soul to appear before a holy God under the guilt and defilement of such abominable lusts, will pray and strive, with all his might, to *use this world, as not abusing it.* Therefore *loves not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* If any man *love the world, the love of the father is not in him.* For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.

P. I even tremble to think of the temptation you are speaking of, because I have been so much under its power; and have too much reason to fear, lest all my faith and prayer, all my self-denial and mortification, should not be sufficient.

M. Your lively sense of this danger, and proposing to yourself the best means for preventing it, remindeth me of a story commonly told of a great *courtier*, who not long ago riding near *Uxington*, and happening to see a man that had just then hanged himself, had him cut down soon enough to recover him; and on examination finding that he hanged himself for love, as lust is very improperly named, he ordered him to *Bridewell*, to hard labour, and scanty provision. After some time the man was cured of love, and came to the noble Lord, to thank him for saving his life, and rectifying his disordered mind.

P. I beg, Sir, you will proceed to other temptations, if you have more to mention.

M. You will meet with much difficulty from the *unhappy spirit of controversy* in the christian world. Among the different sects and parties of protestants, you will find opposite ways of expressing their sentiments on every important truth of the gospel, as well as on the far less important concerns of church-government, and particular modes of worship. In consequence of these differences, you will hear a variety of dividing and distinguishing names. What is worst of all, you will see every party so fond of its
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own peculiarities, as to treat all others with neglect, and too often with contempt, and all the rage of oppression and persecution.

P. Is religion so uncertain a thing? Are christians no wiser and better, than to live in contention? I thought their warfare had been only against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and not against each other. I am discouraged at this news.

M. I had rather you knew this before hand, and be prepared for it, that when you find it a reality, you may in some measure prevent its pernicious influence on your own temper and conduct. To repent and believe, to love God above all, and heaven more than earth, and your neighbour as yourself, to subdue fleshly lusts, and deny yourself, and love your enemies; these and many other doctrines, are harder to be practised, than to be understood. But many, whose christianity is altogether hypocritical and worldly, are sure to concur with those opinions and parties, which contribute most to their reputation and secular interest; and therefore they oppose with violence whatever seemeth to be inconsistent with their worldly views, and are thereby rendered the greatest troublers of the churches, and persecutors of good men. Even those that are sincerely devoted to God, are very defective in their knowledge and experience, and too confident of the rectitude of their first apprehensions of divine truths; or they are so weak in grace, as to have great remainders of unmortified pride, passion, and selfishness; and by this means it is no wonder if the peace and harmony of religious society is too often interrupted. The godly have in them too little of real godliness. When you have tried them longer, you will find their graces scanty, their faults many, and very hard to be cured; and that they are yet but *men*.

P. If I find them as bad as you intimate, how shall I be able to love them as brethren?

M. Amidst all their faults you may still discern the worth and excellency of real godliness, and by observing the mixture of good and bad in their characters,

you may learn many profitable lessons. It may enlarge your ideas of the mercy of God in bearing with so many defects in the very best of his servants. It may convince you of your constant need of a saviour and sanctifier, and how intirely you should live upon the grace of Christ. It may shew you, how bad your condition was before conversion, and what an excellent thing divine grace is, that not only liveth amidst so much corruption, but maintaineth the conflict, till it finally obtain a compleat triumph. It may teach you to be very tender in judging others for their infirmities, and to exercise much forbearance with them in love, and to abhor a persecuting spirit. It may cherish your hope and comfort, that your penitent and sin-burthened soul shall have pardon and eternal salvation. It may render more detestable every appearance of pride, security, and sloth in yourself. It may preserve you from despising the-unconverted or backsliders, and excite you rather to pity and pray for them; and may the more endear to you such christians, whom you find eminent for wisdom and piety, and a patient, prudent and peaceable temper. It may remind you of the wide difference between earth and heaven, and make you more earnest in prayer, that *the will of God may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven*. It may also fill you with ardent longings for that better world, where holy souls shall perfectly harmonize in one flame of love to God and Christ, and where sin and ignorance, pride and passion, oppression and persecution shall never trouble the church triumphant.

P. How great a privilege is a wise and seasonable monitor! I was ready to think ill of the godly, but you have given me the best correction.

M. To think ill of christianity, or godliness, for the faults of any men in the world, is very dissingenuous. What is every degree of sin, but the want of godliness? And is health the less valuable, because many are sick? Or ease, because many are in pain? Or light, because many are blind? Is any one in the world so much against all sin, as God is? He forbids
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deth it. He gave his son to die for it. He chastiseth it in the godly. He casteth impenitent sinners into hell. He for ever excludeth sin out of his heavenly kingdom.

P. But could not God make men better? Why then is the world so bad?

M. God could make every man an angel, and every wicked man a saint. But it pleaseth him to do otherwise, and he well knoweth why. Nothing can undo men, if they do not wilfully and impenitently refuse the mercy which God offereth them.

P. You have almost answered another temptation, which I have sometimes felt, to *think it inconsistent with the goodness of God to torment such multitudes in hell.* When scripture saith, *few are saved*, it is but saying, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Comparatively few are holy. If God save but few, where is the abundance of his mercy?

M. Though God is perfectly good and merciful, yet it is certain there is much pain and misery upon earth, even where there is no sin, as in brutes; and doth not a sinful creature deserve to feel more misery than one that is innocent? Is it not the nature of God to hate sin? Is it not the nature of sin to fill the mind of the sinner with vexation and anguish? If an immortal soul hath cast off God and holiness, and kindled in itself the fire of hell, by its self-tormenting lusts and passions, how can this fire ever be quenched? Though God once pitied his enemies, and redeemed them, is he obliged to interpose, and save the final enemies of his grace, when the season of grace is past? If all this damnation be not only deserved, but executed by sinners upon themselves, why should God be accused of cruelty against such cruel and obstinate self-destroyers? And if human government is necessary, must not the laws and justice of God be more necessary?

P. You have silenced my murmuring thoughts. But since there are so many scandals in the churches, and such multitudes that are wicked and miserable, how may I be kept safe?

M. Remember that all this is no more than Christ himself foretold, as a warning to his disciples. *There shall arise, saith he, false Christs, and false prophets, who shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. Also of your own selves, said an apostle, shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest. Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light; his ministers also are transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. Some cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which they have learned. How early did christians shew themselves to be carnal, and walk as men? While one said, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; were they not carnal? Paul was afraid of the christians in Galatia, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. And how many were there in the churches, to which Christ wrote, who held the doctrine he hated? — In order to your own safety, I would advise you, to keep close to your baptismal-covenant, and reject whatever is contrary to it; for it containeth the truths in which all christians are agreed. Try all doctrines by holy scripture. Love and practise holiness, and your knowledge will become experimental, and your heart will be established with grace. Learn not to your own understanding, but be always humble and teachable. Be sure to pray constantly and earnestly for divine teaching, and that God will guide you by his spirit into all truth, even the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus your way will be made plain before you.*

P. Indeed, Sir, you have made that easy, which seemed to be very difficult. I hope other difficulties will be made as plain.

M. It will be requisite to caution you against *missing some parts of christianity, so as to overlook the rest. Under the influence of this temptation, if it may be so called, you may perhaps be wholly attentive to duty, but negligent of grace; or magnify grace, while you set light by holy duties, and the cultivation of your inward temper. It is too common a mistake, to oppose*

one truth or duty to another, instead of making one happily subservient to the other. O how happy would it be for every serious christian, so far to mourn for sin, as to magnify pardoning grace, and renew and sanctify the heart and life! And so to contemplate the wonderful love of God in Christ, and the greatness and certainty of heavenly glory, as to live in constant joyful love and praise to our creator, redeemer and sanctifier! And, animated by love to God and man, to delight in persevering obedience to God, and in *doing good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith!* This is true religion.

P. I am thankful for this caution. I perceive it is a pleasant thing to be truly religious. But I fear many good people are low in their attainments.

M. You will also need to be as much cautioned against *coldness and formality in religion.*

P. And what shall I do to prevent it?

M. Let your first and chief labour every day be with your own heart, to stir it up to a holy activity. Sit under searching and animating ministrations, read the most serious books, and converse much with lively christians. Watch against that zeal which spendeth itself in disputes for opinions and parties. Fly from the chilling air of love to this world. Take heed of wilful and presumptuous sin. And never be weary of attending holy ordinances; for long intermissions tend to a total neglect of duty, as continued languor in duty tendeth to spiritual death.

P. O that your advices may be remembered when I shall most need them! I could never have thought there were so many dangers in the christian life.

M. There is one that I must add, because it is the most dreadful; I mean the *temptation to infidelity*. Perhaps you may be led to doubt, even the truth of scripture, the being of God, or the divinity and mediatorial office of Christ, or the immortality of the soul, and a future state of everlasting happiness and misery. If you abhor such suggestions, they will nevertheless occasion you great distress; but if you patiently hearken

hearken to them, your danger will be greatest of all. Indifference in religion may be called moderation; but he that doubteth of all religion, can in a time of trial take up with any, while he is heartily of none. He that questioneth whether there is a heaven, will not be much concerned about the way to it. He that hath no sincere faith in Christ, will not reverence the doctrines or precepts of Christ.

P. But if I should be led to doubt of religion, will all such doubts be equally dangerous?

M. No. If your doubts prevail against your faith, then your religion will give place to your worldly interest, and you will never forsake all for Christ. But if your faith prevail against your doubts, it will then *overcome the world*, will maintain the interest of God and Christ, of holiness and heaven in your heart, and however weak your faith may be, you will prove it sincere.

P. This is comfortable. But I have heard that infidels can say more against religion, than the best christians can answer.

M. It is usual for young christians to be more troubled with doubts of their own sincerity, than about the nature of divine truths; as you often see larger and older trees shaken and overthrown by stormy winds, when young plants remain in safety. The reason is, because the larger the tree, the greater resistance it maketh against the wind. God wisely ordereth it, that root and top grow together, and thereby the top is shook by the wind, no more than the root is able to bear. Hypocrites grow in the top of an external profession, but not in the root of inward faith and love, and therefore fall in the time of trial. Not the most subtle wit, but the most sanctified heart, will have the best advantage. Young christians, though illiterate, may stand, when learned doctors fall and perish.

P. I beg you will tell me, Sir, how I may be established against temptations to infidelity.

M. Without

M. Without troubling you with long and laboured arguments, I chiefly recommend to you a thorough knowledge of what you promised in baptism.

P. You seem to make the baptismal-covenant serve for all religious purposes.

M. As you believe in the father, who reconcileth us to himself by his son; and as you believe in the son, who hath given us eternal life; so you also believe in the holy spirit, whom the father and the son send to us, to dwell in us. It is the holy spirit therefore that is the proof of christianity. All true christians are *born again*, and *born of the spirit*. The holiness of every regenerate soul is the best help to a confirmed belief of the gospel. If you are truly sanctified, you *have the witness in yourself*; you have the sanctifying spirit of Christ, *by which he sealeth you to the day of redemption*; and this *spirit of promise is the earnest of your inheritance* of heavenly glory. As a child's likeness to a parent evidenceth the relation, so doth the divine nature and image in the regenerate. This divine nature which is in you, will not suffer you to deny your father, saviour, and sanctifier. And in this easy manner you may prove to yourself the truth of the gospel, and stand firm against all the assaults of infidelity.

P. May the Lord help me to understand and remember what you have said! But you have not told me, how they, who have not the spirit, shall be convinced of the truth of the gospel.

M. An unregenerate man might have been convinced by the sight of miracles, and may by their historical evidence; and may also of the fruits of the spirit, in the wisdom and holiness of true christians, and that *the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*.

P. I perceive how necessary it is that all true christians should cherish the spirit, grow in grace, and live holy lives, because their holiness is a standing witness for Christ and the gospel; and their sins will dishonour Christ more than I ever imagined.

M. When our blessed Lord *prayed for them which should believe on him through the word preached by his ministers,*

ministers, he urged his petition with these remarkable arguments; *That they all may be one, as thou, father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. If therefore you desire to overcome temptations, to honour your profession, and draw others to Christ, be solicitous to grow in divine knowledge; resolve to die, rather than sin wilfully; be ever on your watch and guard, as surrounded with dangers; let your whole heart and life be given up to God, and ever employed in his service: and take heed of trusting in your own understanding, goodness, or resolutions; but continually look by faith to Christ and his spirit, as your only strength. Thus may the Lord, who hath converted you, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you!*

DIALOGUE VI.

The Minister sheweth his Parishioner how he may recommend serious godliness to all his acquaintances, especially to his family.

Minister. COME, Neighbour, I hope by this time you have acquired such a measure of self-knowledge, as to discern your own true interest, and what you would desire of me, in order to your further improvement in a divine life.

Parishioner. You have instructed me in the nature of christianity, and acquainted me with the several temptations I am likely to meet with, and how to resist them.

them. It appeareth to me much wiser to prepare me for these things before hand, than to suffer the fire to kindle of itself among such gun-powder as there is in my heart. They are strange physicians, who rather chuse to cure diseases at the height, than to prescribe any thing by way of prevention. But let me intreat you, Sir, to favour me with some further instructions for a holy life, and be pleased to put them in writing. I fear my memory will not sufficiently retain what is spoken in conversation, so as to make a proper use of it for helping others in divine knowledge, and more especially my family.

M. What kind of instructions do you mean?

P. My request, Sir, is to have you distinctly write down your reasons for conversion and a holy life, and your directions how to attain to it. I well know that the same reasons which first made me a christian, must help to keep me so. And I have also a desire to read them over frequently to my family.

M. But in drawing up such a paper, I am afraid it will be necessary to throw so much into a narrow compass, as to render it almost useless to your family, unless in reading it to them you will yourself largely explain it, as you go along.

P. I hope my heart will be so much engaged, while I read to my family, that I shall not be easy without endeavouring to make them understand it, and answer the questions it may lead them to ask.

M. Here then is the paper, and may it please God to follow it with an abundant blessing! Permit me for once to read it to you.—

“ Though the salvation of souls is of infinite importance, yet multitudes think it not worth their enquiry. In hope that some will have better thoughts, I beseech the reader, to consider and practise the following directions.”

“ Know thyself. Begin at home. Consider what it is to be a man. Thou art nobler than the brutes. Thou hast reason, to rule thyself, to know thy God, to foresee thy end, and learn thy way and duty.

“ Thy,

" Thy reason is the image of God. Thy holy wisdom
 " and goodness is the chief part of his image, and on
 " which dependeth thy happiness. Thou hast a soul
 " that cannot be satisfied till thou knowest God; nor
 " be regularly governed, without a regard to the hopes
 " and fears of future joy and misery; nor be happy,
 " without seeing, loving, and delighting in God, as
 " he is revealed in the other world. If the nature of
 " all things be fitted to its use and end, so must it be
 " with thine."

" *Know thy God.* Know that he is infinitely perfect,
 " and is thy maker and ruler, thy highest happiness
 " and chief end. If he be our ruler, he must have
 " rewards for the obedient, and punishments for the
 " disobedient. If he be our chief good, we should
 " resign up ourselves to his will, and be all obedience
 " and love to him."

" *Know what godliness is.* It is sincerely and en-
 " tirely to give ourselves to God; submitting to his
 " disposals; obeying his laws; delighting in him;
 " desiring to see and enjoy him for ever in heavenly
 " glory; and daily expressing these desires in prayer
 " and praise. Such godliness is the improvement of
 " all our powers, the end and business of our lives,
 " and the health and happiness of our souls."

" *Know what a state of sin and ungodliness is.* When
 " men are proud of their own greatness, wisdom, and
 " goodness; would be at their own disposal; and rule
 " and please themselves, as their fleshly appetite dic-
 " tates; and supremely love the riches, honours, and
 " pleasures of this world; this is a state of sin and un-
 " godliness."

" *Know that most men are ungodly.* Men's hearts are
 " filled with impiety, filthiness, and injustice; their
 " reason is a slave to their senses; and their carnal
 " mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the
 " law of God, neither indeed can be. This corruption
 " is hereditary, and as it were, our nature. And a
 " nature so unholy must be odious to God, and unfit
 " for

"for the enjoyment of him here or hereafter; For
 "what communion hath light with darkness?"

"Know that man's salvation must be of grace. To
 "love God, and be loved by him, is the heaven of
 "souls; but all this is contrary to an ungodly state.
 "Till men have new and holy hearts, they can nei-
 "ther see God, nor love and delight in him. And
 "till sin be pardoned, and God reconciled to the soul,
 "what peace or joy can it expect?"

"Know your insufficiency for your own salvation. How
 "difficult for a hardened, worldly, filthy heart to be-
 "come wise and tender, holy and heavenly, and ab-
 "hor the sins which it most fondly loved! And what
 "can we do to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile the
 "rebellious soul to God?"

"Know that God doth not yet deal with you according
 "your to deserts. He prolongeth your life, and addeth
 "innumerable mercies; though your sins have for-
 "feited all. Thus experience telleth you, that there
 "is hope of mercy for the children of wrath. This
 "hope cometh by Jesus Christ, who is the redeemer
 "and saviour of the world, and therefore took our
 "nature, revealed the mind and will of God, con-
 "firmed his doctrine by glorious miracles, was him-
 "self an example of perfect righteousness, suffered the
 "shameful and accursed death of the cross for our sins,
 "rose from the dead for our justification, commissioned
 "his apostles to preach his gospel to the world, then
 "ascended into glory, where he ever liveth, interce-
 "deth and reigneth, as the adorable head of his church.
 "He hath procured and established a covenant of
 "grace, of which baptism is the seal, and by which
 "pardon and salvation are secured for every soul that
 "sincerely repenteth towards God, and believeth in
 "the Lord Jesus Christ. The holy spirit accompanieth
 "the ministrations of this gospel to the converting,
 "regenerating, and sanctifying the souls of men.
 "Thus by a saviour and sanctifier most all be recon-
 "ciled and renewed, that shall be glorified with God
 "in heaven."

"Consider

“ *Consider next what is the state of your own soul.*
 “ Are you sincerely penitent and believing? Are you
 “ renewed by the holy spirit, and so united to Christ?
 “ Without this there is no salvation, and if you die
 “ before it be done, woe unto you! Try your state, and
 “ follow the search. If your soul is yet a stranger to
 “ this sanctifying work, fly to Christ without any de-
 “ lay, beg for his spirit, cast away your sins, give up
 “ yourself entirely to God in Christ, and engage in
 “ his covenant, with full resolution never to forsake
 “ him. Deny yourself, the desires of the flesh, and this
 “ transitory world, and fix all your hopes on heaven.
 “ nor rest till your eternal happiness is made sure.”

“ *Be not ignorant of Satan's devices, by which he*
 “ *hindereth your sanctification.* He will either suggest
 “ that holiness is hypocrisy; or debauch by fleshly
 “ appetites; or keep in ignorance; or delude by
 “ worldly hopes; or ensnare with evil company; or
 “ stupify the conscience, and harden the heart, that
 “ eternal things may make no impression; or ensuare
 “ the godly, as all of them melancholy; or where
 “ there are convictions, labour to put off conversion
 “ by delays; or where the necessity of holiness is seen,
 “ cheat souls with some false appearances of it, and
 “ chiefly by intemperate zeal for opinions and parties.”

“ *Take heed of oppressing reason by sensuality or divers*
 “ *flows.* Love retirement. God and conscience have
 “ much to say, which in a croud of vanities you are
 “ unfit to hear. Resolve to spend half an hour daily in
 “ deep attention to your everlasting state.”

“ *Know the pleasures of this world in their nearness*
 “ *to death.* How soon must you bid farewell to all
 “ that, for which worldly men sell their souls! The
 “ day is even at hand; and dare you live unready,
 “ and part with heaven for such a world as this?”

“ *Contemplate the nature of the life to come.* Think
 “ what it is for a soul to appear before the living
 “ God, and be judged to endless joy or misery. If
 “ the devil tempt you to doubt of such a life, remem-

“ her

“ber that reason, scripture, and his own temptations,
“are witnesses against him.”

“*Observe men's thoughts of holiness when they come to
“die. Except some desperate wretches, do they not all
“speak well of it, and with their lives had been spent
“in love to God, and obedience to his laws? Do they
“then magnify lust, wealth and honour? Had they
“not rather die like mortified saints, than careless
“sinners? See and know this, O man! and be wise
“in time.”*

“*Think who they were, that are now honoured for
“their holiness. What manner of life did apostles live,
“and all the saints and martyrs? Did they make a
“jest of holiness, or dare to persecute it? And is he
“not self-condemned, who honoureth the name of
“saints, but will not imitate them?”*

“*Distinguish well between a christian and a heathen,
“and between a godly and an ungodly christian. Doth
“a christian only excel in opinion? Must not the
“unholy christian suffer more than the heathen? Is
“not every ungodly christian an hypocrite, while the
“godly is sincere in his profession? How base is that
“religion, which only serveth to condemn men, be-
“cause their lives are contrary to their tongues?”*

“*See through the devil's policy in the number of religi-
“ous opinions, parties and controversies. How many
“think themselves religious, for their zealous talk,
“peculiar notions, or their distinguishing sect! How
“often is edifying discourse turned into unprofitable
“dispute! Tho' you cannot resolve every doubt, nor
“answer every question, yet you may easily know
“the true religion; for it is that which Christ and
“his apostles taught, which scripture requireth, and
“in which all christians are agreed; it is first pure,
“then peaceable, most spiritual and heavenly, just and
“charitable.”*

“*Fly from profane and sensual company. It is an
“enemy to reason, sobriety, and holiness. How can
“they be wise for you, who are foolish for them-
“selves? Or have pity on your soul, who have no
“pity*

“pity on their own? Will they help you to heaven, who are making such haste to hell? Chuse better companions, if you would be better.”

“Once more, *judge not of a holy life by hearsay.*

“Try, and then judge. Resolutely and entirely give up yourself to God, as your reconciled Father; to Christ, as your saviour; and to the holy spirit, as your sanctifier, in the bonds of an everlasting covenant. Every blessing will then be your own. You will have grace to help, mercy to pardon, the best ministers and christians to assist you with their counsels and prayers, angels to guard you, divine promises for your cordials, and the spirit of promise to dwell in you. When you leave this world, your saviour will receive your soul to the participation of his glory, and afterward raise and refine your body, and justify you before the world, and make you equal to angels, and you shall live for ever in the glorious sight and perfect love of God. This is the end of faith and holiness. But if you harden your heart, and refuse mercy, then everlasting woe will be your portion, and there will be no remedy.

“Now, *Reader*, I beg of you, and beg of God that these few words may sink into your heart. Think, as one that must shortly die, who deserveth your love and obedience more than God? Or your thankful remembrance more than Christ? Or your care and diligence more than your own salvation? Is there any felicity more desirable than heaven? Or any misery more terrible than hell? I know too many are laughing at these things, and reproaching the godly, and amidst all their vain amusements are saying, they trust God with their souls, and hope to be saved without so much ado. But if God and conscience witness against sin, and for a holy life, I beseech you never to regard their gainsayings, who will soon be glad to eat their words, and will wish they had lived a holy life, though it had cost them the greatest shame and suffering this world could inflict. O man! resolve im-

mediately

“mediately and unchangeably, and God will be your’s
“and you shall be his for ever. *Amen.*”

P. Sir, I heartily thank you. This *paper* is the very thing I wished for; and may God help me to make a good use of it! If I should be so happy as to see my family awakened to a sense of their need of holiness, while I read and explain to them these directions, I shall then be desirous of giving them further help, by setting before them the particular *duties of a christian life*. Though I have attained, by the blessing of God upon your instructions, to some knowledge; yet I much want your assistance in leading me to a clearer knowledge of every part of my duty, both to my own soul, and to the souls in my house, and how one part of duty is connected with another. And if such instruction was also given me in writing, it might be exceedingly useful both to me and my family.

M. Indeed, my friend, this additional request is so reasonable, that I know not how to deny you. I have here *another paper*, in which I hope, you will find your desire gratified. I will read it, and leave it with you.

“When men have begun a religious life, they have
“much more yet to do. All blossoms are not fruitful, nor doth all fruit come to perfection. Many
“souls fall away, who had very promising beginnings.
“Many dishonour Christ, grieve their faithful ministers, and disturb the peace of the church, by their
“ignorance, errors and contentions. Many by their
“irregular passions are a burthen to neighbourhoods
“and families, and to themselves also. Whereas real
“christianity is a life of such holy light and love,
“such purity and peace, as demandeth the admiration and reverence of all men, and rendereth christians eminently useful and amiable to each other,
“and happy in themselves. To promote these important purposes, let the duties of a christian life be attended to, under the following heads.”

“Let christian doctrine lie clear and distinct in your
“understanding and memory. This will establish you
“against seduction and infidelity, and will be always
“present

“ present with you for your help in every grace and
 “ duty, like the skill of an artist in performing any
 “ work he undertaketh. For want of this, your faith
 “ may too easily be shaken by *them who lie in wait*
 “ *to deceive.*”

“ *Live daily by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the*
 “ *mediator between God and you.* Think of the fatherly
 “ love of God as coming to you only through Christ;
 “ of the holy spirit as his purchase and promise; of
 “ the covenant of grace as sealed by his blood; of
 “ the christian ministry as his appointment, and of
 “ all your time and talents as his gift. When you
 “ think of sin, infirmity, and temptation, think also
 “ of his pardoning, sanctifying, and all-sufficient
 “ grace. Let his doctrine and perfect example be
 “ always before you as your rule. Go to him in all
 “ your doubts and fears, and take him as the spring
 “ of your life, strength, and joy, and live upon him,
 “ and by him. When you die, resign your soul to
 “ him, that you may be with him *where he is.*”

“ *Believe in the holy spirit, so as to live and act by*
 “ *him, as the body doth by the soul.* You are for this
 “ very purpose baptized into his name. The spirit,
 “ having indited the gospel, and sealed the truth of
 “ it by miracles, doth thereby regenerate and govern
 “ all true believers. He is not now given to reveal
 “ new doctrines, but to enable us to understand and
 “ obey what is revealed. As the sun by its sweet and
 “ secret influence produceth and nourisheth natural,
 “ so doth the holy spirit our spiritual life. In the
 “ strength, and under the guidance of the spirit, you
 “ must believe, love, pray, and even manage all your
 “ common concerns, that *holiness to the lord* may be
 “ written upon all.”

“ *Live wholly to God.* Let faith and hope in him,
 “ and love to him, be daily exercised. Make use of
 “ the son and spirit to lead you to the father; and
 “ of faith in Christ to kindle and keep alive the love
 “ of God. Neither know, desire, nor love any crea-
 “ ture, but purely in subordination to God. Call
 “ nothing

“ nothing prosperity or pleasure but his love ; nor any
 “ thing adversity or misery but his frowns. See the old
 “ serpent in all those who would allure, or affright you
 “ from your duty to God. Fear God much, but love
 “ him more. Let love be the soul and end of every
 “ other duty. Place your religion in the love of God,
 “ or in what leadeth to it, or is produced by it.”

“ *Daily delight in the belief and hopes of heavenly*
glory. On earth the sight of God is as in a glass ;
 “ but when we behold the glory of God in heaven, the
 “ delights of love to him will be perfect. On earth
 “ your desires may exceed your hopes. Look not for
 “ mount Zion in the wilderness. Christ reigneth on
 “ earth, as *Moses* in the camp, only to guide us to
 “ the land of promise. Our perfect blessedness will be
 “ there, where *the kingdom is delivered up to the father,*
 “ and where God is *all in all.* How can you travel
 “ one whole day to such an end, and never think of the
 “ place, to which you are going? When earth is at
 “ its best, it will not be heaven. You live by faith
 “ only in proportion as you live for heaven in seeking
 “ it, or upon heaven in hope and joy.”

“ *Strive to make religion always pleasant.* Often
 “ look to God and heaven, to Christ and the spirit, to
 “ promises, and to mercies received. Think how un-
 “ becoming and injurious it is to your profession, to
 “ hope for heaven, and yet live as mournfully, as those
 “ that have no higher hopes than earth. How should
 “ it fill you with joy, to think of living in the joys of
 “ heaven for ever ! Especially rejoice when the mes-
 “ sengers of death tell you that your eternal joy is
 “ nigh. Abhor all suggestions which would make re-
 “ ligion seem a tedious life, either to yourself, or o-
 “ thers. The hypocrite forceth and frameth his reli-
 “ gion to his carnal pleasures ; but our hearts must
 “ have a holy suitableness to the pleasure of religion.”

“ *Watch against this flattering delusive world.* Satan
 “ puts the pleasure, wealth, and honour of this world
 “ in the balance against God, and holiness, and hea-
 “ ven. The bait succeedeth, while reason is asleep,

“ and thereby is made a slave to sensuality. Both
 “ our reason and faith are weak, if for the pomps and
 “ vanities of this world we can forget God and our
 “ souls, death and judgment, heaven and hell, and
 “ even deliberately command them to stand by.
 “ Fear the world, when it seemeth sweet and amiable!
 “ Love it not, if you would love God and your own
 “ salvation.”

“ *Crucify the flesh.* The tears and sorrows of many
 “ years may perhaps not repair the loss occasioned by
 “ one transient indulgence; as was the case of *David*,
 “ and many others. Know what lust you are most in
 “ danger of, and there set your strongest watch, and
 “ make it your daily business to mortify it. Depend
 “ not merely on resolutions, but fly from temptation;
 “ touch not, nor look on the tempting bait. What
 “ vast miseries come from small beginnings! Temptations
 “ lead to sin, and small sins to greater; and sin
 “ and hell are not to be played with. Open your sin
 “ or snare to some friend, that shame may save you
 “ from danger.”

“ *Keep a strict watch over your words and thoughts.*
 “ To this end, preserve a tender conscience, and well-
 “ regulated affections. Know well the sins and duties
 “ of the tongue, that you may avoid the one, and
 “ discharge the other. Your innocence and peace
 “ much depend on this part of self-government; nor
 “ less on the government of your thoughts. Furnish
 “ yourself with matter for meditation, and often retire
 “ for that purpose. But take heed of over-stretching
 “ your thoughts by deep musings, nor let them be
 “ scattered abroad upon impertinent vanities. Be con-
 “ siderate; dwell much at home; and most intimately
 “ converse with your God and conscience. He was
 “ never wise, or good, or happy, who was a stranger
 “ to sober and impartial consideration. How to be
 “ good, to do good, and finally enjoy good, must be
 “ the sum of all our thoughts. Keep them first holy,
 “ then chaste and charitable, and immediately check
 “ them in their first motions towards sin.”

“ *Carefully*

“ *Carefully and diligently redeem time.* What haste doth it make? How soon will it be gone? How highly will it be valued, when a moment of it can not be recalled? What important business have we to do, though we should live a thousand years? Spend time as men that are going out of the world. Let not health deceive you in expectation of living long. Compute your expence of time, and redeem it from sleep and idleness; from curiosity and compliment, from unnecessary recreation, and even from such inferior good, as would hinder a greater. So spend time, that you may comfortably review it, when it is gone, and in the nearest views of eternity.”

“ *Love your neighbour as yourself.* Abhor all that selfishness, pride, and passion, which are the enemies of love; and those opinions, parties, and backbitings, which would destroy it. Take him for Satan's messenger, who speaketh evil of another, without a just cause. Let the publick good, and the salvation of men, be your business, and not an accidental affair. And what you are not able to do yourself, persuade others to do.”

“ *Take heed of spiritual pride.* If you over-value your own understanding, you will treat your crude conceptions and gross mistakes as if they were gospel-truths; and instead of having compassion on the weak, you will despise your teachers, censure all that differ from you, persecute them as far as you have power, and think all those intolerable, who will not take you for an oracle. The church hath always suffered by such proud, peevish, and unruly professors on the one hand, as well as by the profane on the other. Take heed of both. When contentions are rising, be you quiet and silent, and keep up a zeal for love and peace.”

“ *Make conscience of relative duties.* Honour and obey parents, and other superiors. Neither despise, nor resist government. If you suffer unjustly, take

“ it patiently, and instead of murmuring and rebelling, reform yourself, and commit your all to God.”

“ *Maintain family-religion.* Holy families are the chief preservers of religion in the world. Let not worldly care turn the worship of God in your house into a lifeless form. Read the scriptures and pious books to all the souls under your care. Talk with them seriously of their eternal interest. Pray with them fervently. Watch over them diligently. Be an example of wisdom, holiness and patience. See that the Lord's-day be spent in devout preparation for eternity.”

“ *Manage your worldly business with industry and piety.* Live not in idleness. Labour, and work the thing which is good, that you may have to give to him that needeth. Sloth is sensuality. The body must be employed, as well as the soul, or both will be losers. But let all be as the labour of a traveller, and in all aim at God and heaven.”

“ *Seek peace of conscience on a scriptural foundation.* Value an able and faithful minister, to whom you may open your case in secret; or any other experienced christian; and be not displeased with their reproofs. Avoid not only presumptuous hopes, which would embolden you in sin; but unreasonable fears, which will hinder your loving and praising God. Judge not your spiritual state to be good, for your abundant knowledge, good memory, ready utterance, or lively affections; but because God, and holiness, and heaven have your highest estimation, your deliberate and resolute choice, and your most earnest endeavours.”

“ To conclude, *Be prepared for sickness, sufferings, and death.* Live above outward prosperity, and the favour of man. If they whom you have most obliged, should be false and cruel to you, wonder not, but pray for your enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, that God would turn their hearts, and pardon their sins. Account it your mercy to be driven from the world to God. Be ready to die, and you are
“ ready

" ready for all other events. Seriously ask your heart,
 " what shall I want in a dying hour? And let it be
 " procured without delay, and not be to seek in the
 " time of your extremity."

" This is true religion and godliness. All this is to
 " be seriously such, as we profess ourselves to be!
 " This will distinguish you from hypocrites, make you
 " an honour to your profession, and a blessing to all
 " about you. Happy the land, the church, the fami-
 " ly, in which such as these are to be found!"

P. O! Sir, may I and my family partake of such se-
 rious godliness! I hope these papers you put into my
 hands will help it forward. I think them a great trea-
 sure, and can never enough thank you for them, and
 for all your care and kindness.

DIALOGUE VII.

*The Minister urgeth upon his Parishioner the infinite im-
 portance of doing all he can to engage his family in
 serious godliness.*

Minister. I AM desirous to know, my friend, what
 use you have made of the assistance afford-
 ed you in our last interview. Is your divine life the
 better for those instructions you then took home?

Parishioner. I find the things, Sir, which you have
 recommended, are excellent, and must be very sweet
 to those who have suitable skill and disposition; and
 some pleasure I meet with in my weak beginnings.
 But the greatness of the work, and my doubts and dif-
 ficulties almost overcome me. O how hard it is to
 repent and believe aright! If you had not forewarned
 me of this temptation, I should have thought my con-
 dition, though safer, yet more distressing than ever is.

was. But I hope I am in the way to have more enjoyment of myself.

M. What is your principal difficulty?

P. There is a great work to do in my family, to govern them in the fear of God, especially to educate my children, and daily to worship God among them. I am so unfit for it, that I am ready to omit all. I beseech you, Sir, help me with your advice.

M. Resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to perform your duty in your family as well as you can; therefore devote it to God, and use it as a society sanctified to him. If God be not the master of your family, the devil will. If you devote your family to God, he will be its guardian and provider, and will mingle his blessing with all its comforts and sorrows. A holy family is a church of God. You will daily live in the joyful hope of meeting and dwelling together in heaven, and that your wife, children, and servants shall shortly be fellow-citizens with you of the heavenly Jerusalem. How pleasant to join with one heart and mind in prayers and praises to God! How lovely to see in each other the image of God! When any of you die, how comfortably may the rest attend the grave, in hope that the soul is received to Christ in glory! On the contrary, if your family be ungodly, it will be grievous to think of wife, and children, and servants, as exposed daily to the wrath and curse of God; and their sickness and death will be rendered unspeakably more awful. Holy families are the chief seminaries of the church of Christ upon earth. From thence spring pious and faithful magistrates and ministers. Though learning be found in schools, godliness is often received in more early education. In worshipping assemblies, the devotion and attention is principally among those, who are members of pious families; and for such, good ministers labour with peculiar pleasure. In degenerate times, when good ministers are wanting, their *lack of service* is best supplied by the pious heads of pious families. In some respects the instruction, worship, and discipline of such families have

have advantages, which churches have not. There are but few to be taught and ruled, and those few are always present, and may be spoke to in season, and with frequency, either together, or each one apart. If therefore you have the bowels of a parent, devote your children to God, teach them his word, educate them in holiness, restrain them from sin, and prepare them for salvation.

P. I confess there is great reason for what you say, if I only consult my natural affection, and much more my experience. Had my parents better educated me in my childhood, I should not have been so ignorant, nor perhaps so ungodly, as I have been. Many take more care of their trades or farms, than of their children's everlasting happiness.

M. I wish I could speak so, that all parents might hear! I would freely tell them, that multitudes are more cruel to their own children than bears and lions: God hath committed their children's souls as much to their care, as their bodies. They are first to devote them to God in baptism; then to teach and exhort them to keep the baptismal-covenant; and after to remind them of the state of their souls, and their need of Christ and redemption, of holiness and everlasting life. They are to watch over them with wisdom, love, and diligence, in order to save them from satan, sin, and hell; and are always to set before them the example of a holy life. Instead of this, they turn baptism into a mere ceremony, promise without intending to perform, or devolve that promise on god-fathers and god-mothers, as ignorant and ungodly as themselves. They never teach their children their danger from depraved inclinations, and the snares which every where surround them, nor their need of a saviour and sanctifier. They are content their children should spend the Lord's-day in vain amusements, instead of having family-prayer, reading the scriptures, with other pious books, and catechising, to attend upon. They in effect teach them to break their baptismal vow, and, under the name of christians, to rebel against God and Christ.

Is not this greater cruelty, than if they famished their bodies, or turned them naked into the world? For father and mother thus to betray their children's souls, is worse than devilish! O unmerciful parents, repent for your own sakes; repent for the sake of your children!

P. I find many think the education of their children belongeth to school-masters and ministers.

M. In the business of education parents have the first and principal share. If children and servants are sent to a minister, in ignorance and impiety, he must do his best for them. But how much more good might he do, if parents did their part! We talk of the badness of the age, and at the same time it is chiefly owing to irreligious heads of families.

P. I tremble to think of my children being lost forever, and beg to know my duty to them.

M. As the divine promise is made to true christians and their seed, therefore be first of all sincere in your own covenanting with God. Humble yourself for your violations of it, and with seriousness and thankfulness enter your children into it. As long as they are infants, their right to covenant blessings intirely dependeth on your sincere repentance and faith. When they grow up to reason, do your utmost to engage their own hearty consent to the covenant. While you teach them the words of scripture, and of catechisms, ask them familiar questions about the state of their own souls, and their personal concern with God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with death and judgment, heaven and hell. Make a holy life appear to them the most honourable and profitable, the most safe and pleasant life in the world. Early acquaint them with easy and entertaining parts of scripture and church-history. Speak much in praise of holy men in the former, or latter ages, and point out the opposite characters of those who were noted enemies to godliness. Give large encomiums on the riches of grace, and the joys of glory. Let the singing of psalms and hymns be their frequent exercise. Constantly but gently accustom them to submit.

mit their will to your's, and this in order to their giving themselves up to the will of God in all things. Keep them as far as possible out of the way of temptation. Take great care of their diet, that it be always healthful and moderate. Never let either their body or mind be idle. Even their recreations should tend more to invigorate nature, than to please a corrupt fancy. Keep them from gaming for money, or reading lewd novels, or plays, or seeing them acted upon the stage. In their apparel, consult health and decency, and avoid pride and unnecessary expence. As for their company, direct their choice of the prudent and pious, give them earnest and frequent cautions against the contrary, and especially against every indecent freedom with persons of another sex. Charge them to maintain truth and uprightness in all they say and do. Often shew them the worth of time, the great work to be done in it for eternity, and how uncertain the life of man. Put into their hands the writings of the best divines. Set before them a holy example. Chuse such callings for them, and lead them into such connections in life, as have the greatest likelihood to promote their religious interests. Do all this in the meekness of wisdom, and with such fervent prayer for them, that they may daily perceive the bowels of a parent, and how dear they are to you, and that you are ever aiming at their truest happiness.

P. Tell me my duty to my wife, and her's to me.

M. Dwell together in love. Faithfully help each other in the education of your children, the government of the family, and the management of your worldly affairs. Excite each other to every christian grace and virtue; strengthen each other against all temptations to sin; join together in family and secret worship; and administer divine comforts to each other in the prospects of death and eternity. Labour to please each other in all things that are lawful. Carry this mutual support and comfort through every scene of affliction. And though all outward comforts should

fail, yet endeavour to be delightful companions in holy love, and in heavenly hopes and joys.

P. What are the duties of a religious husband?

M. Though it is chiefly his province to teach, govern, and provide for the family; yet it should also be his invariable rule of conduct to support the honour and authority of his wife. Nor should his superiority to her be discerned in any thing so much, as his more eminent attainments in knowledge and grace, and as the first and ablest to bear up under every trial.

P. What are the duties of a religious wife?

M. Certainly it will be her part always to excel in love; and in love be cheerfully obedient, and meekly submissive to her husband's will and pleasure, in all things consistent with the will of God. She should ever be intent on increasing his love to her, and confidence in her, and setting a lovely example to all the rest of the family, by her wisdom and prudence, her integrity and uprightness, her humility and sweetness of temper, the law of kindness in her lips, contentment with her condition, industrious improvement of her time, great caution in the choice of her acquaintance, and a frugality in her expences justly proportioned to her husband's ability and the best interest of her family. Above all, she should be most eminent in training up her children from their earliest years in knowledge and piety. She will often catechize them, and speak to them in the most insinuating manner of God and Christ, of heaven and holiness, of the evil of sin; and the nature and necessity, the pleasure and profit of prayer. Thus may she prove one of the chief instruments in reforming churches and kingdoms, and consequently one of the greatest blessings to the world.

P. Pray what is the duty of children to parents?

M. They must love their parents affectionately; learn of them with submissive attention, especially divine truths; diligently obey them in all things lawful, from a conscientious obedience to God; treat them with every token of reverence and esteem; be contented and satisfied with what their parents provide;
ever

ever ready for every employment, as their parents shall direct; patiently receive their parents' admonitions and corrections, humbly confessing their faults, and promising to amend; and taking the advice of their parents, as to their acquaintance, situations, and connections in life; especially doing their utmost for their assistance and support, if they should at any time need it.

P. And what is the duty of children towards their heavenly father?

M. They should learn their own sinfulness by nature and practice, the engagements of their baptismal covenant, and entirely to give up themselves, with the greatest seriousness and resolution, to their creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. They should daily apply to Christ by faith and prayer for his justifying and sanctifying grace. They should remember that life is short and uncertain, full of labour and sorrow, and their grand concern should be to make sure of eternal life. The word of God should be their delightful study, especially on Lord's days; and every day they should *flee from youthful lusts, and be lovers of God more than lovers of sinful pleasures*; ever esteeming it their greatest liberty, honour and happiness, to have their wills bowed to the will of God, and to that of their superiors, for God's sake.

P. As I have servants in my family, I shall be glad to know, Sir, what is my duty to them?

M. While you exert so much authority, as is necessary to secure obedience and respect; let it always be joined with the mildness and meekness of the friend and the christian. Make conscience of instructing them in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ; pray for them and with them; and ever set before them a pattern of every christian grace and virtue. Keep them from bad company, and all the temptations and opportunities of sinning against God, that you possibly can. Never impose upon them any thing contrary to their consciences, or injurious to their bodily health. Bear with their infirmities, and leave them no just occasion to

complain of you, as ungenerous in your engagements to them.

P. How should servants behave to their master?

M. Undoubtedly it is their indispensable duty, while he commandeth nothing but what is in itself lawful, and fit for them to do, to avoid all speech and behaviour that savoureth of dishonour, contempt, or disobedience; to manifest a chearful readiness, without any grudging; and to be as faithful behind his back, as before his face. They must abhor lying and deceit, and never defraud him in buying or selling, nor take any thing that is his, without his consent; but be as careful and frugal for their master, as if it were for themselves. Instead of murmuring, from a desire of luxury and idleness, they should be more solicitous about doing their own duty to their master, than about his behaviour to them; because sin is worse than any suffering. The secrets of the family they are never to reveal. When admonished of their faults, they should patiently submit, freely confess, and faithfully amend. They should never forget to pray for the family, that a divine blessing may be upon all its affairs and interests. And the whole of their service to their master should be in obedience to God.

P. Children and servants cannot be together in the same family without some inconvenience, how should they behave towards each other?

M. By all means excite one another to all their duties to God, their parents, and their master and mistress; help one another in useful knowledge, especially the knowledge of Christ and salvation; and affectionately guard each other against temptations to wantonness, luxury, angry passions, or the arts of fraud and deceit. They should always in humility and love do as they would be done by, pass by little offences, and hide each others faults, so far as will be consistent with the real happiness of the family. But for sins against God they should admonish one another privately; nor let it be known to the head of the family, till private admonition is found ineffectual.

P. I

P. I wish my questions may not weary you, Sir; what is my duty to my neighbours?

M. You are to love them as yourself, and to do for their souls and bodies, as you would be done by; to promote their comfort and usefulness, their knowledge and piety, speaking no evil of them, doing them no injury, and patiently bearing and forgiving injuries from them.

P. How may I be a good subject to magistrates?

M. Give them honour and reverence, as desiring their commission from God himself. Do all you can to support their authority. Pay them every tribute that shall become due. Obey them in all things consistent with obedience to God and conscience; excite others to the same obedience; and patiently suffer where God forbiddeth you to obey. Ever promote the free execution of justice, and oppose and detect to the utmost all treasons, conspiracies, and rebellions. Do all this for conscience sake, in obedience to God, and for the public good, and enforce it with your constant and fervent prayers.

P. How shall I spend every day in my family, answerable to my christian profession?

M. As time is precious, waste none of it in unnecessary sleep. Lift up your first waking thoughts to God, in thankfulness for the mercies of the night; contemplating the blessed rest in his glorious presence, and what a privilege it is to be always in his love, and under his protection. After dressing the body, let devout retirement for secret prayer adorn the soul; and let the whole family be united together in prayer, morning and evening, at hours most convenient for their attendance. Consider all your worldly business, as the work to which God hath called you; do it with a single eye to his glory, and with constant diligence, believing that idleness is equally injurious to body, soul, and estate. Whether your business be transacted alone, or in company, endeavour to connect with it some devout meditations, or improving converse. Let temperance ever attend your table and cup, and every meal

meal begin and conclude with prayer and praise. At the close of the day, recollect how you have spent it, that you may be thankful for its distinguishing mercies, penitent for its faults and follies, seek fresh supplies of pardoning and sanctifying grace, and lie down to rest with a holy confidence in divine favour and friendship.

P. How shall I perform family-worship?

M. First, look up to God for his gracious assistance and acceptance; then read a chapter or psalm, or a page or two of some good expositor, and after singing a psalm or hymn, if it can be done, conclude with a fervent prayer, suited to the state of your own mind, and the particular circumstances of your family.

P. Are short or long prayers to be preferred?

M. It will be best to vary, according to the difference of times and persons. Care should be taken that prayers be not lengthened by formality and affectation, nor be contracted by carnality and sloth.

P. Will it be best to pray by a book, or freely express my desires in my own words?

M. God has left every man to chuse for himself.

P. How shall I make a right choice?

M. In secret, it will be best to pray freely, according to the present sense of your own wants, it is also desirable you should pray as freely with your family. But if you find much perplexity of mind, and great defect in expression, it may be better, for a time, to pray with your family by a book. If a book may help you to more copious and lively expressions, in your closet and family, make your best use of it; only lay it aside, whenever you feel yourself straitened by it, and more enlarged without it. But take heed of deadness and formality in prayer, which may too easily seize upon you, even when you make no use of a book. I would intreat you to avoid such a calling, or way of life, as would be inconsistent with family-worship. Labour to maintain in yourself and family, a delight in God and in his service. In order to that, let your prayers

prayers have much in them of thanksgiving and praise. Above all, beg for the holy spirit, to help your infirmities, that you may know what you should pray for as you ought.

DIALOGUE VIII.

The Minister giveth his Parishianer directions for all the publick and private duties of the Lord's-day.

Parishianer. O! SIR, when I was with you last, you set me a great deal of work, which my conscience telleth me is the most important that can be done. But my naughty heart is slow to learn, and slower to practise. Nevertheless I am come to you for more. Let me entreat you now to instruct me in the right observation of the Lord's-day?

Minister. I cannot so well gratify your present request, without shewing you first our obligations to sanctify the Lord's-day. You know Christ gave his apostles a commission to teach the world his truths, and settle his gospel-churches. In order to this, he assured them they should have the infallible conduct of the holy spirit; who is therefore the author of what they did in obedience to their commission. Christ rose from the dead on the *first day* of the week; on that day he often appeared to his disciples, and on that day he accomplished his promise, by *filling them with the holy spirit*, to enable them to *speak with other tongues*. Thus the new world began on that day. And on that day the apostles constantly celebrated the holy assemblies, and appointed the churches to do so. Hence all the churches in the world, without exception, ever since the times of the apostles, have unanimously separated and set apart the Lord's day for the more solemn and publick worship of Almighty God.

P. The

P. The obligation to sanctify this day is very convincing. But is it a *sabbath*, and doth it come in the place of the seventh day sabbath?

M. Be not concerned about mere names. It is enough that it is a day set apart by Christ and the spirit for public worship, and called the Lord's-day. If you mean a day of *ceremonial rest*, then the Lord's-day is not a sabbath; but all such sabbaths are abolished, as types of better things.

P. One day in seven is the same proportion of our time now, as when the law of *Moses* was made; and I am sure it is a great blessing to men, to be obliged, every seventh day, to rejoice in God, to lay aside our worldly care and labour, and to learn the way to everlasting life. Alas! what would servants and labourers do without it? It affordeth a seasonable and suitable employment for the soul. I experience the great benefit of it to myself. I plainly perceive, that religion is in the most flourishing state, where the Lord's day is most strictly observed; and greatly declineth, where this holy day is neglected and profaned. I am therefore very desirous to be taught the best manner of spending this day.

M. As the principal design of the day is public worship, therefore the joining in the worship of a solemn assembly is to be preferred before that which is more private. The time of public worship should be chiefly filled up with instructions in the gospel, and with praying to, and praising, our heavenly father, redeemer, and sanctifier. The temper of our minds should be holy joy, gratitude, and love, excited and supported by the exercise of faith and hope. A day of thanksgiving for the greatest mercies should employ both heart and tongue for God; and so far as this holy work would be hindered by other thoughts and words, employments or pleasures, we should carefully abstain from them, and not on a mere ceremonial account.

P. But be pleased, Sir, to point out to me the particular duties of the Lord's day.

M. En-

M. Endeavour to prepare for it before, by such a prudent disposal of your worldly affairs, that they may not hinder or perplex your mind. In the beginning of this holy day, joyfully remember the resurrection of Christ, which began the glorious state of the gospel. Rise as early then, as on any other day. Presently retire for secret prayer. Then read, sing, and pray with your whole family, manifesting to them the pleasure you feel, and how welcome the day is to you, and all its sacred exercises. Be early at publick worship, nor let any of your family be absent, but for real necessity. Return from the house of God to secret prayer and meditation. At your table be cheerfully instructive, devout and edifying. After dinner, help your family to remember what they heard in publick, call some of them to read to you, and when you have sung a psalm or hymn, take them again to the publick assembly. If you can, repeat to your family the sermons you heard; or read some lively author to them, and spend the rest of the evening in praying and singing with them, in catechising some, conversing freely with them all on divine subjects, and assisting them in the best manner of spending some time, each of them, in their own closets. Conclude the day, with self examination, repentance for every failing, thankfulness for innumerable mercies, and cheerful repose in the hands of your compassionate God and saviour.

P. How may I profitably attend on preaching?

M. Understand what you hear, be duly affected with it, remember and practise it.

P. What would be most helpful to my understanding that which I hear?

M. Read the scriptures and other good books; chuse to sit under a plain and convincing preacher; attend with diligence; take notice of the leading design of the discourse, and endeavour to unite the several parts of it; if you are doubtful of any thing, go to the preacher himself for information; especially pray that God will bless his own word, and enable you to walk suitably to it.

P. How,

P. How may I hear with due affection?

M. Next to your sitting under a lively preacher, seriously consider yourself as in the presence of God, hearing from him concerning your everlasting salvation, and that your soul must prosper in proportion to your improvement by what you hear. Shake off drowsiness, collect your scattered thoughts, and remember God is waiting for your answer; whether you will accept of his offered grace, or not? If you deny God but this once, you know not but he may leave you to yourself, and never make you such an offer more. Think how the damned in hell would hear, if they might be tried again, and sit in your place. Look to Jesus for his quickening spirit. When you are at home, preach over the doctrine to your own heart, labour to impress it on your family, and spread it before God in prayer, that his grace may render it successful.

P. How may I remember what I hear?

M. Observe the preacher's method, and endeavour to fix in your mind the heads of his discourse, so as to write them down immediately, or when you return home. If you forget his expressions, yet attend to his leading design.

P. How may I practise the truths which I hear?

M. Go to church with an earnest desire to have your depraved heart renewed and your spiritual wants supplied; as you would go for your body to the market, or to the physician. When you hear the application of a discourse, let conscience be especially awake, and then resolve to obey whatever God shall make known to be his will. At home let conscience be permitted to receive your resolutions; and to examine, what graces are strengthened? Have you more affecting views of eternity, more lively hope of glory, and warmer love to God and Christ? Take heed of doctrines, which pretend to exalt Christ and grace, to the neglect of holy obedience. Fly from disputes and controversies; and from those who scoff at holiness, as if it was hypocrisy; and also from those who prefer superstitious customs before the commandments of God. If you can, take

take up your abode amongst those that are eminent for practical godliness; and examine yourself daily, how your practice correspondeth with your profession.

P. In reading the scriptures, what directions have you to promote my advantage?

M. Always come to them with a believing, devout, and reverential temper of mind, as to the word of the living God, by which you must be ruled and judged. Chiefly peruse the new testament. Let the plainest passages explain the more difficult. Make use of some good expositor, which your minister shall recommend to you. Especially let prayer be always joined with your reading the word of God.

P. What must I do in publick prayers and praises?

M. Join in them, not as a bare hearer, but with all your heart. As the expressions of prayer and praise as well as of preaching, will in a great measure be human, therefore expect them to be imperfect, and treat them with candor, and not with peevish pride and prejudice. Only if you think they contain any thing contrary to the word of God, let not that part be your offering; for in that case God will not accept it at your hands.

P. How must I receive the Lord's supper?

M. With due preparation for it, and in a manner suitable to such a solemn transaction.

P. What is due preparation?

M. It includeth acquaintance with the design and nature of this institution, some evidences of your real christianity, and serious attention to your present temper.

P. What acquaintance is it requisite for me to have with the design and nature of this institution, that I may be prepared to partake of it?

M. The design of the Lord's supper is not to be a real sacrifice of Christ, nor to turn the bread into his real flesh, nor the wine into his real blood. Nor is it to flatter men in their presumptuous hope, and confirm them in wickedness, nor save them by a mere outward performance. Nor was it ever intended by Christ, as a qualification of any man for a civil office.

But

But he appointed it to be a solemn commemoration of his sacrifice and *death, until he come*; that we may *behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*. In this holy ordinance true christians renew the covenant of grace, which they made in baptism, and solemnly receive Christ for their life, and yield up themselves wholly to him. Here they have such views of the evil of sin, the love of God in Christ, the firmness of the covenant, and the greatness of the gift bestowed upon them, and their own infinite obligations, as are indeed the most suitable means of kindling their repentance, desire and love, their gratitude, hope and joy, and of strengthening their faith and their resolutions for new and better obedience. Here they have communion with God in the exercise of their christian graces, and receive yet more grace from the fulness which is in Christ; at the same time displaying the badge of their publick christian profession, and their love to and communion with one another, and with all that love Christ. Here the consecrated bread and wine afford such a visible representation of Christ crucified for our sins, and promote such an affecting remembrance of him, that true christians are thereby greatly assisted in professing their sole trust in a crucified Christ for the free and full acceptance of their persons and services in the sight of God, and in comfortably concluding that Christ with all the blessings of the covenant of grace are their own.

P. The design and nature of the institution is very excellent. May God help me to understand these things more distinctly! But in order to my farther preparation, you say, I must have some *evidence of my real christianity*. Pray, Sir, what is it?

M. Sincere repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. But what must I do, if I doubt the sincerity of my repentance and faith?

M. Do your best to obtain satisfaction, and then follow the best judgment you can form of yourself. If you say, "I am not sure that my repentance and faith

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"are sincere; but, as far as I know my own heart, I think they are;" you may then be a communicant. It is not assurance, but sincerity, that is in this case necessary.

P. How if I should be mistaken and prove insincere?

M. If you are not sincere, and yet think you are, it is your sin to be destitute of sincere repentance and faith, and to indulge such self-flattery. Your danger is equal to your sin; for whether you are a communicant or not, you cannot be in a state of salvation without sincere repentance and faith.

P. What if I find it too difficult to try myself?

M. Go to some experienced christian, or judicious and faithful minister, and desire assistance.

P. Can another tell what is in me, if I cannot?

M. The patient knoweth better than the physician what he feelth, and must tell it; but it is the physician's province to explain the nature and tendency of the disease, and direct to a cure.

P. May not an unconverted person fancy himself a penitent believer, and be a communicant?

M. He that is truly willing to have God for his God, Christ for his saviour and lord, and the holy spirit for his sanctifier, may come to the Lord's-supper. He that is not truly willing, ought not to come, while he refuseth to give Christ his heart.

P. Must such be kept from the Lord's-table?

M. None but God and conscience can know the heart. It may be my duty to receive such, at the same time that it is his sin to desire it.

P. And what if the openly profane should desire to be communicants, or should actually be so?

M. All that are impenitent should, either be kept, or cast out of communion. But this must not be done without sufficient proof and trial, and after admonition, exhortation, and forbearance.

P. But if many of the profane and impenitent should be communicants, may I join with such?

M. You should contribute, all you can, to set on
foot

foot a scriptural church discipline; but the bare neglect of it by others, is not a sufficient cause of your separation. Yet, if you have opportunity, and it may be more for your edification and comfort, you may join yourself to a more regular society.

P. I think, Sir, you told me, that due preparation for the Lord's-supper not only required me to be acquainted with the institution, and to be a real christian; but to be *careful about the present temper of my mind.* Pray what did you mean?

M. You should be much in self-examination: Whether your repentance and faith be sincere? Whether you heartily approve of your covenant-engagements, and walk suitably to them? And if you have contradicted them, whether you are deeply humbled, and earnest in prayer for *mercy to pardon, and grace to help you?* You should also consider, what you have to do, and what you are to receive, when you come to the Lord's-table.

P. Be pleased now to tell me what I must do there?

M. I told you, the Lord's-supper was to be received in a manner suitable to such a solemn transaction. When you are attending the administration, endeavour to have every christian grace in exercise. Let your faith be firm in the great truths of the gospel. Entertain the most abasing thoughts of your sinfulness and misery, and the most exalting thoughts of Christ, of his blood and righteousness, his spirit and grace. Hunger and thirst after Christ, and after communion with God through Christ. Admire the wonders of redeeming love. Love him who thus loved you, and rejoice in the sense of *so great a salvation.* Repose a cheerful confidence in Christ; and in the covenant sealed with his blood. Renounce every thing that rivals Christ in your heart, and be ready to suffer for him, who died for you. Love your fellow-christians, promote their union among themselves, and cheerfully communicate to their wants. Renew your self-dedication to God through Christ, and resolve with purpose of heart to cleave unto

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the Lord. Do all this in the lively hope of Christ's second coming, and of being glorified with him.

P. What is there in the Lord's supper to excite in me this exercise of every grace?

M. There you will have the bread and water of life to hunger and thirst after; the dying lamb of God to shew you the deserts of sin, and the demands of divine justice; and the seal of your pardon to make you all gratitude and obedience. There *your shewing the Lord's death till he come* will cherish your *hope of glory*; your love to God will kindle and flame, while you view his wonderful love to you in all your long enmity against him; and your *crucifying the world, and the world's being crucified to you*, will result from your affecting sight of the cross of Christ. There you will value christian and brotherly love, while you contemplate the whole church of Christ, as *one body, partaking of that one bread*; and while you yourself receive Christ and salvation, all you are, and have, and can do, will be entirely devoted to him. Indeed every thing will there contribute to invigorate your graces; the minister's solemn confession, petition and thanksgiving; the consecrated bread and wine representing your Lord's body and blood; your being one of the guests at such a feast; and your consenting with all your heart to the engagements of the gospel-covenant.

P. When I go away from the Lord's table, what should I do, and how should I behave?

M. Strive to live answerable to your solemn vows; and therefore make use of all other means of grace, that the vigour of your holy resolutions may be constantly maintained, and that your soul may be daily filled with joyful love and praise to him, who hath feasted you with his salvation.

P. How often would it be proper for me to partake of the Lord's supper?

M. In the primitive churches it was done at least every Lord's-day. And therefore take every opportunity for it that you can with convenience.

P. Be

P. Be pleased to shew me how I may on any occasion meditate for my religious improvement.

M. The best subjects for meditation are, either the truths of the gospel, and the nature and certainty of a future state of happiness;—or the love of God in the gift of his son, the all-sufficiency of Christ to save, and the effectual operations of the holy spirit;—or the evil of sin, the danger of temptations, and how to avoid and overcome them;—or the nature, number, and tendency of our comforts and sorrows in our prosperity and adversity, together with our nearness to death, and preparation for it. We should meditate as often, and as long, as will be consistent with the proper discharge of all other duties, and so as to refresh, and not burthen our spirits. As for the manner of conducting this duty, we should observe how profitably ministers preach, and should endeavour by meditation to preach to our own hearts and consciences, so as to render sin odious, urge ourselves to universal holiness, and feel every divine comfort.

P. What advice can you give me for secret prayer?

M. Desire is the life of prayer. Seriously consider what your desires are. Study the Lord's prayer. Express your desires as plainly and fully as you can, with respect to any particular sin, or mercy. Be much more solicitous about your hearts, than your lips; *for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Go to God only in the name of Christ, trusting in his merits and intercession, and expecting no communion with an holy God, but by a mediator. Live suitably; since *watching and praying* are never to be separated from each other.

P. I must often converse with my fellow-creatures, and I desire to do it always as becometh a christian. For this purpose I beg your directions.

M. The best furniture you can have, is knowledge and well-regulated zeal. The inward disposition is all in all. As the man is, so will he speak. If you are with those that are able to teach you, be attentive to what they have to say; for pride will dispose you to
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be imprudently talkative. If they are silent, who should teach you, ask them some modest and seasonable question; that they may not continue silent for want of opportunity or invitation to speak. If you ate with the ignorant and profligate, nevertheless speak with humility and wisdom, with gentleness and love. If you must reprove them, do it, if possible, alone and not before others. Whether learning from others; or endeavouring to instruct them, desire to have your own heart and their's seriously affected, and led on to pious resolutions.

P. I have but one thing more to desire at present, and that is concerning days of humiliation and thanksgiving, whether in private or publick, how I may keep them to the best advantage?

M. Publick days for humiliation and thanksgiving will be regulated by others, and will only need your serious attendance. If you keep such days in private, it must be left to your discretion, both as to the occasion for it, and the manner of doing it. It may be very proper after falling into some great sin; or having met with some threatening danger, and remarkable deliverance; or when God hath appeared to you in some distinguishing way of judgment or mercy. Humiliation is expressed by fasting and prayer, with a penitent heart confessing sin, and earnestly seeking for pardoning mercy thro' a redeemer. Thanksgiving is expressed by temperate feasting the body, and especially by the soul's rejoicing in God, celebrating his praises for what he hath mercifully done, and cheerfully renewing our devotedness to him, and resolutions for better obedience. The weak and infirm may humble themselves before God without fasting, or with a small degree of it; and the poor, or the sickly, may return thanks to God without feasting. The great end to be aimed at in humiliation is repentance; and thanksgiving, increasing love to God; and in both, a life more devoted to God through Jesus Christ.

D I A L O G U E IX.

The Minister assisteth his Parishioner in the views of death, and in making suitable preparation for it.

Parishioner. **S**IR, I have been with some on their death-beds. I perceive what hinderances men have in preparing for their latter end, when physicians and friends attend them under their bodily pains and weaknesses. I beseech you, help me to prepare while I am in health.

Minister. Blessed be God, for giving you such wisdom! There is no greater instance of folly, than men's delaying their serious preparation for death! O! what a change is it, to pass suddenly from company, business and pleasures, and every thing here, into a world we never saw, into joys or sorrows which must never end! What a stone is a hardened heart! What insensibility is there in ungodly men! What! believe such a change is sure and near, and not prepare for it! Believe that they must be in heaven or hell for ever, and yet live as if hell and heaven were alike to them!

P. It is madness indeed! And therefore a man that loveth himself should prepare to die.

M. Every bell that tolleth for the dead, is our call to prepare to follow. Every clock that striketh, hath a voice to delaying sinners. Yea, every breath we draw, and every time our pulse beateth. O! what abundance of preachers have we, to tell us of our death; and yet men live, as if they did not believe it, or had never been warned of their danger!

P. Surely, Sir, it is a thing men need not be told, that they must die, but only how to be ready.

M. Why is there so much difference between men's thoughts in health and at death? In the former, no-
thing

thing relisheth with them but the present world; in the latter, they cry, "The world is vanity." In health, a holy life is odious; in sickness, they adopt *Balaam's* wish, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* In health, they count prayer a weariness, nor will bear to be told of their sins; but in the approach of death, their cry is, "Mercy! mercy! I have sinned. O for the time "I have lost! O that God would try me again! "O that I was sure of heaven!" Certainly that which is best at death, is best in health. Nature taught the unjust steward seriously to consider, how to provide another habitation. But men that are sure they must soon leave this world for ever, cannot be prevailed upon to think seriously, how their souls may find a comfortable abode with God.

P. Pray, Sir, mention some of the advantages men would find in the serious thoughts of death.

M. O my friend! The serious thoughts of death would *teach ministers how to preach, and the people how to hear.* He that thinketh he is perhaps preaching his last sermon, will be earnest with his hearers to repent, and believe, and turn to God. But if he thinketh of preferments to get, and many years to live, he will by his hypocrisy beget hypocrites, and teach men to treat christianity as a stage-play. Often have I arose from my knees with shame and grief, to think I could pray with so little earnestness at the door of eternity; and have come down from the pulpit, condemning myself for speaking with no more affection to men though so near to another world. Death made *Peter* earnestly stir up even sincere christians, *knowing that shortly he must put off this tabernacle.* To animate *Timothy* in his great work, *Paul* told him, *The time of my departure is at hand.* And he enforced his exhortation to the elders of *Ephesus*, by this melting thought, *That they should see his face no more.* If our hearers were all of them sure to die the next week or month, how easily could we preach them into a con-

tempt of the world? Were a dying man told, "Be
 " of good comfort, Sir, you have had many a merry
 " cup; you have enjoyed every delight that earth
 " could afford; your houses and lands are well set-
 " tled on your children." Would he not say? "It
 " is my sorrow, that I am leaving all; and my chil-
 " dren cannot be long after me: But where is my
 " soul going? And where shall the souls of my chil-
 " dren go?" Thus the *rich man in hell* would have
 had his *brethren* on earth warned, *lest they also come*
to the place of torment. But wherever earth is prefer-
 red to heaven, even wisdom itself will say, *Thou fool,*
this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then
whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?
 —The serious thoughts of death will *abate our*
pride. Can that man be proud, who is going to an-
 swer for all his sins before a God that hateth pride?
 Can he swell with haughtiness to day, who is to be in
 the grave, and perhaps in hell to-morrow? Can he
 be so curious and costly in adorning a body, which
 must so soon be rottenness and stench?—It will
 teach us *how to spend our time.* O precious time!
 How art thou vilified by idle, voluptuous, and un-
 godly men? They can play it away in a thousand
 vanities, as if God had made it too long; but when
 they find it is past recovery, what are their cries?
 " O for more time! For one year longer! O that
 " we had again the time we have lost, in order to
 " repent and make sure of heaven! O that our's
 " had been the strict and holy lives of saints! O time,
 " time, how impossible to recall one moment! How
 " hateful a word is pastime! O happy men, that have
 " hearts to use time for God and Christ, for the soul
 " and eternity!"—Such thoughts will also teach us
how to behave to each other. How peaceably do men
 lie together in the grave! There they have no more
 contention, nor cruelty, nor oppression. On a death-
 bed you will profess to forgive all the world. Then
 you dare not desire revenge, lest God be revenged

on you. And why will you be worse in health, than on a sick, or a dying bed?—To add no more, the serious thoughts of death will convince us that sin must be avoided rather than sufferings. Die we must, whether we will or no. And is it not better to die for Christ, if he should call us to it? Will it comfort us at death, to think of the sufferings we escaped, by the sins we committed?

P. I have wondered why the blessed God would not save us from dying, since Christ died in our stead. But my doubt is satisfied by these advantages attending the serious thoughts of death.

M. Though there is a judgment to come, yet God will have some justice done upon sinners in this world. Though Christ suffered for us, his sinning servants must suffer something. But through the wisdom and goodness of God, our punishment is a cure to the sin that caused it. Were we to live many hundred years, like the Antediluvians, what a wicked world would this be? Then covetousness, ambition and sensuality would have no restraint. But the near approach of death curbeth the vilest of men, and standeth, like Haman's gallows, before their own doors. When Satan hath brought them to the pinnacle of their ambition, shewed them the kingdoms and glory of the world, and drawn them to accept his gift, and on his dreadful terms; after all, death assureth them of falling into so much the more tremendous ruin. When Belshazzar in all his pomp and luxury, saw the part of the hand that wrote on the plaister of the wall of his palace; then his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Nothing shews sin to be so abominable as the nearness of death. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.

P. It is strange men can be unmindful of a change so near, and of such infinite importance.

M. All our religion is but a continual preparation for death. But, alas! if we ever so earnestly entreat men to care for their souls, and to *work out their own salvation*, we cannot prevail with them; no, not to remember seriously that they must die; and to live as those that firmly believe it.

P. They are unwilling to be troubled with things of such an awful nature.

M. Suppose you were obliged to quit your house in a few months, and I should advise you to provide another, would it be troublesome advice? If this miserable world is better to men than heaven, yet since they must leave it, whether they will or no, they ought thankfully to hear of a better, and never rest till they have a title to heaven.

P. I am very desirous to know how I may in health be ready for a safe and comfortable death.

M. Those only die safe, and go to heaven, who are pardoned through the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the holy spirit. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* But all who die safe, do not die comfortably. There must, in a comfortable death, be some certain knowledge that you have the graces of the spirit, such as faith, hope and love.

P. But why is a safe death desirable?

M. He that is not ready for a safe death, and dieth so, is lost for ever. He is indeed unready for every thing: for any duty, or any suffering; he is losing his time, and only preparing for hell. Therefore no care or business, no profit, honour, or pleasure should afford him any rest, till he is converted, and made holy, and is ready to die.

P. Shew the importance of dying comfortably.

M. Comfort is founded in the knowledge of safety. Uncertainty is painful. To believe a heaven and hell, and not know which will be our's, is a dreadful thought. To have all earthly comforts fail, and

be

be utterly doubtful of everlasting comfort, is an uneasy state. All the enjoyments of this world cannot comfort a wise man, unless he can daily fetch comfort from heaven. How can he willingly go out of this life, if he hath not some considerable hopes of a better? When he is comforted with the thoughts of *being for ever with the Lord*, what need he fear? How quietly may he sleep? How easily may he suffer? How joyfully may he live or die?

P. Now I see that to get ready to die, must be the principal work we have to do.

M. Life itself is nothing but the time allotted us to prepare for eternal life. Every hour is lost, that is not spent in such preparation. The whole of a christian's life must be holy and devout, though he is not always in acts of worship. He must always be seeking the glory of God, and the salvation of his soul, under the conduct of the word and spirit of Christ. Therefore all those opinions and practices are to be avoided, which no way tend to prepare us for a safe and comfortable death.

P. Pray, Sir, how is this preparation to be made?

M. It must principally be done *in your health*, and in some measure *when you are sick*. While you are in health, prepare for death, *by your care and diligence to strengthen your faith in the truth of scripture, the immortality of the soul, and the life to come*. To confirm your faith, attend to the sacred impressions of the holy spirit, first on the scripture, and next on your own heart, and the sanctifying change made in all your temper and conversation; you will then *have the witness in yourself*; even the nearest, the surest, and the most constant witness, that Christ is true, and that he is preparing you for a better life. — *Sincerely repent of every known sin*. Nothing maketh death so frightful as guilt. Nothing so reasonably exciteh fear, as unpardoned sin. Nothing should make us doubt of pardoning mercy, but our doubting the sincerity of our repentance and faith in Christ. Therefore spare not sin, but repent without delay; confess it freely,

and forsake it resolutely. *The sting of death is sin.* And forgiveness is promised to true repentance.—*Trust your soul, with all its interests, in the hand of Jesus Christ, your saviour.* He is the owner of it by the right of redemption. He is in heaven, and both heaven and earth are in his power. He that saved you from sin and satan, will save you from the torments of hell. If angels rejoiced at your conversion, Christ and angels will joyfully receive your victorious soul *to the spirits of just men made perfect.* Christ hath testified his love at so dear a rate, that you should not call it in question. To save your soul, is his proper work and office, and even his covenant. He himself is your judge. *He hath the keys of the unseen world, and of death.* His work in heaven is to intercede for you, and prepare a glorious mansion for your reception. You are by grace and reconciliation made an *heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ*; and will he not give you that, to which he hath already given you so much right? Are his love and promise, his oath and seal, nothing to you? He would never have given you a heavenly mind and desire, nor have set you on seeking heaven, if he would not actually bring you thither. You must live, and die by faith in Christ, if you would live and die in a well grounded peace.—*Devote yourself entirely to God, and live to please him, and to do good to all around you.* Thus your conscience will bear witness at death, that, notwithstanding your infirmities, you answered the great end of life, in living to God, and not in gratifying the flesh, nor inordinately striving to be rich, or to secure the honour and applause of men. And there is no evidence in our favour so full and satisfying, as the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. O that we duly considered how much a life of total resignation and devotedness to God hath a tendency to produce a peaceful and joyful death!

P. But we are to put no trust in any work or holiness of our own, nor derive comfort from it.

M. I.

M. I acknowledge that we are not to expect our justification and acceptance, either wholly, or in part, from any work or holiness of our own; because nothing less than perfection of holiness can justify us, according to the law of works. But since Christ hath fully satisfied for our violation of that law, and will now judge us by his law of grace; therefore he freely justifieth us, and at the same time graciously rewardeth us according to our sincere and holy obedience. Our own holiness, or works must have no share in the honour due to any work of the father, son, or spirit. None trusted more entirely in Christ than *St. Paul*; and yet he rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience, concerning his own sincere and holy obedience.

P. I understand how I may depend wholly on divine grace, and yet take comfort in my own sincerity and obedience. Please now to go on with the directions for a safe and comfortable death.

M. Let me caution you, to *take heed of quenching the holy spirit*. There is no effectual knowledge, no holy love to, or delight in God, no divine life in our souls, but what is wrought by this illuminating, sanctifying, and quickening spirit. This heavenly guest must be tenderly cherished, if you would have the *joy of the holy spirit*, either in health or sickness, in life or death.

P. What is it to cherish, or quench the holy spirit?

M. *Resisting the spirit* is our most heinous sin, and for which we pay dearest. The punishment is the more dangerous, the less it is perceived and lamented. The spirit is awfully withdrawing, when men gradually lose their love to holiness, grow indifferent to the things of God, formal in acts of worship, more bold with sin, and more worldly-wise in pleading for every sinful inclination. One gross sin, or many lesser iniquities, may so quench the spirit, as never to be recovered in the same degree through the remainder of life.

P. Alas! If this be my case, what must I do?

M. Deal faithfully with yourself by deep repentance. Search diligently into your own heart. Mortify your

favourite lusts. Fly from the temptations which have been most prevalent. Return to neglected duties. Converse with the most lively christians. Pray that *God will not take his holy spirit from you, but restore unto you the joy of his salvation.*

P. But how shall I know whether I have the spirit, or whether I have less or more?

M. This is to be known by your love to God and man, and your desire and endeavour to do good, and to abound in the fruits of righteousness.

P. What are the best evidences of sincere love to God and man?

M. Your love to God and man is sincere, if you are more desirous of knowing and practising the word of God, and of being perfectly holy in heaven, than of having the riches, honours, and pleasures of earth; — if you pray and strive for *the coming of the kingdom of God, and the doing his will*, in the prosperity of the church, and the holiness and happiness of all men, more than for any secular interest of your own; and if all this be your constant pleasure. — *Live continually in a thankful sense of the love of God to your own soul.* Daily consider the greatness of that love, both in the nature of God, and in the blessings of the gospel, and also in all your own particular experiences of his love. This will make heaven desirable, and overcome the fears of death. This is a fruit of faith, more excellent than faith itself. This delighteth the soul, and powerfully draweth it to God, even by the experiences of his love and goodness. — *Live also in heaven, while you are upon earth, by frequent heavenly contemplation.* How can the soul be pleased with the thoughts of going to a God, a place, a society, and employment, to which it hath always been a stranger? To lay up treasure in heaven, is to live so, as will most effectually secure the heavenly reward; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. If you are risen with Christ, you will seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; and will set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, and your

your conversation will be in heaven. There is your father, saviour and comforter, your home and happiness, your glorified friends, your best interest and chief business. Read, hear and pray, as if heaven were open to your view. Resist temptations, and transact worldly business, like a traveller in his way home. Often set before your eyes the certainty, nearness; and unconceivable splendor of the heavenly glory. Think of the millions in triumph there; while you are here in fears and cares. Think of those, who once were compassed with infirmities, but are now freed from all. Think how holy souls see the glorified Jesus, know God and his works, love, and praise, and rejoice with holy angels. Think of your pious acquaintance, who are gone thither before you, and walk with them, as it were, in the streets of the New Jerusalem. Surely with such thoughts in health, death will never be unwelcome. — *Live also a life of mortification.* Let nothing in this world be too dear and pleasing to you. If you are fond of any thing here, parting will be the more difficult. But if you *crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts*; and become indifferent to the things of time and sense, and be much conversant with unseen glories; there will be little to entangle and hinder the willingness of your departing souls. — *Get some good assurance of your own sincerity.* If you doubt of this, it will excite your fear, and make you unwilling to die. Examine your repentance, faith, love, and every christian grace. When you trace the evidences of your sincerity, bless God, and rejoice in his love; and watch and pray, that you may not lose your attainments, but *forgetting what is behind, may reach unto that which is before.* When you know that you are passed from death to life, you are fortified against most temptations to shrink back from your eternal rest. — And if the soul hath all things in order for dying, it will be easy to *settle your worldly affairs.* You will prudently contrive, that there may be no contention about your estate when you are dead. If you have wronged any, you will not fail to make full and speedy restitution. If you are at

variance with any, you will do all in your power to be reconciled, and though they refuse to forgive you, yet you will unfeignedly forgive and pray for them.

P. O that in health I may thus prepare for death! Tell me what may be done, even in sickness?

M. Health is the best time for every work, and especially for this. Yet, if the nature and length of the disease will admit, something may be done. And if it be one, who hath made no sort of preparation in health, but his affliction hath seized him in his unconverted state, alas! what shall I say? In such circumstances it will be very difficult to know, whether repentance is merely the effect of alarming fears, or of a new heart. Such a one hath many things to learn, much employment for his thoughts, and a great change to be made in him, before he can be fit to die. How improper for all this is a little time of sickness! There is however some hope, and while there is life and hope, we must do our best.

P. I tremble to think of such a one. Pray, Sir, what could you say to him?

M. Say? It would be necessary, were it in his last moments, to endeavour to convince him, that till he feeleth his need of a saviour and sanctifier, he is in an unconverted state, destitute of the favour of God, and exposed to everlasting destruction. But if he humbly acknowledgeth his sinfulness and misery, I would affectionately offer Christ and salvation to him, with all the blessings of the covenant of grace. I would urge him to give his immediate and hearty consent to have God for his reconciled father, Christ for his saviour and lord, and the holy spirit for his sanctifier and comforter; and to resolve, if he recovered, to live to God through Christ, in all new and holy obedience. I would solemnly assure him, that nothing could deprive him of pardon and eternal life, but his refusing Christ, and grace, and holiness. I would beseech him to think of the infinite love of God in providing a saviour for him, and how exceeding great and precious the promises are, and what unspeakable glory there is in
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heaven for every sincerely penitent and believing soul. Then I would help him in lifting up his heart to God in prayer, and shew him the infinite importance of praying for himself; that his heart may be made truly humble and contrite, penitent and believing, and be effectually converted from all sinful love, to the love of God and Christ, of heaven and holiness. I would conclude with repeated assurances, that if his late repentance and conversion would produce a holy life, in case he recovered, and was not the mere result of a frightened conscience, he would undoubtedly be saved.

P. This would be faithful and tender, and most likely to do good, if it were not too late. But supposing, Sir, you were visiting some real convert, who had long before been preparing for death, and was now in his last illness; what advice would you give such a one, in order to farther preparation?

M. My advice would be to this purpose. — Consider your sickness, as a fruit of sin, yet wisely and graciously designed by your heavenly father, to produce *the peaceable fruit of righteousness*, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Secure this advantage of affliction, and it will sweetly reconcile you to the dispensals of providence. — Pray for divine grace and consolation suited to your weak and low condition. — Renew your repentance towards God and your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and warn all about you to set their hearts on heaven, and to make it the business of their lives to prepare for death. Tell them what evil you have found in sin, what vanity in the world, what goodness in God and holiness, what comfort in Christ and the promises, and how miserable you had now been, if you had never cared for your soul till now. Beg of them to live, as they would die; to give their hearts to God in Christ; to redeem their precious moments, and make sure of everlasting life. — Recollect your past mercies; to be born in a land and age of gospel-light; to have had early conviction and conversion, pardon and reconciliation, deliverance from sin and hell, and lively hopes of glory. Let your views
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of the goodness and love of God to you, fill you with contentment and satisfaction, and turn your fears into fervent love to Christ, and ardent desires to be with him.—Be swallowed up in the delightful thoughts of the everlasting rest, to which you are going; where you neither shall sin, nor fear, nor suffer any more; but love and rejoice, more than you can now conceive or wish; and where God and Christ shall be more to you, than light to your eyes, or the soul to the body.—Resign up your soul into the hand of your God and saviour, without one distrusting care for yourself. Trust a God who is love itself, and your own father and God. Trust a saviour, who hath done and suffered so much for you, and for millions before you. Take not one anxious thought about your corruptible flesh, or the labyrinths in the world of spirits; but cheerfully commit all to God in Christ.—And if you have capacity for expressing it, magnify the goodness of God, and speak well of his name, his word, his ways. Let others see there is a reality in the comforts of faith and hope, and that the death of the righteous hath enough in it, to make their life also desirable. As your tongue was given you to praise the Lord, and hath but a little while more to speak, exert all its remaining strength in his praise, and in telling what you have found him to be, and in celebrating the glories of his kingdom into which you are entering, that others may catch the sacred flame, and feel something of your hopes and desires. Imitate your dying saviour, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* And pray, like the first martyr, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

FORMS

FORMS of PRAYER

FOR THE

FAMILY and the CLOSET.

A Morning Prayer for a Family.

MOST gracious father, we come to thee, encouraged by thy precepts and promises, and by the mediation of thy dear son, to humble ourselves at thy footstool, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. It is our great privilege to have this liberty of access to thee, and our best business and comfort to worship thee daily in our family.

We thank thee for making us capable of knowing and loving, serving and enjoying thee. Though by our apostacy from thee, and rebellion against thee, we have destroyed ourselves; yet, adored be thy mercy, in thee is our help found. We thank thee for laying help for us upon one, who is mighty, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. We thank thee, that Christ and salvation by him have been made in some degree precious to our souls. How great was thy mercy, which spared our lives, and kept us out of hell, while we were long going in the paths of the destroyer! How much greater was thy mercy, in bringing any of us to a serious sense of our past sinfulness, in awakening us to true repentance, and enabling us to seek after thy favour and friendship, as our highest happiness!

But

But we have ill requited thee for all thy goodness and love. The sins of our hearts and lives, of our childhood, youth, and riper age, testify against us. Long did we forget God and our souls, Christ and eternity, and live in ignorance and unbelief. We were long deceived by earthly vanities, and resisted too long the motions of thy holy spirit. Even since any of us have known thee, and engaged ourselves to thee, we have too often returned to folly, and have been negligent in loving and serving thee.

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Wash us in the blood, and accept us for the merits, of thy dear son. We dare not come to God but in the name of Christ, nor expect any mercy but for his sake. Give us thy holy spirit to dwell in our hearts by faith, to fill us with heavenly love, and strengthen us for all holy obedience. Let our thoughts and affections be fixed on God and Christ, on divine precepts and promises. Let grace regulate and sanctify all our words and actions, our senses, appetites and passions. Help us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to do all the good in our power, both to their souls and bodies. Take away our pride, and cloath us with humility, and put upon us the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Deliver us from every snare of sin, and every hurtful lust. Especially save us from the sin that most easily besets us.

We beseech thee to favour us with all suitable helps for improving us in knowledge and holiness, and add thy blessing to them. Make us faithful and circumspect in all the duties of our several places and relations. Dispose of all our worldly affairs, as shall be most for thy glory, and the good of our souls. Mercifully recover those that are in sickness and pain, succour the tempted, supply the necessitous, comfort the mourners, be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow, and a present help in every time of trouble.

Continue

Continue thy gospel in our land. Furnish all thy churches with wise, holy, and useful ministers, and succeed their labours for promoting knowledge and righteousness, truth and peace. Bless the king, and all in authority, and teach them to govern, and us to obey, as the subjects of thee the king of kings, and the high and only potentate. Let all the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. Send the gospel to them that want it, and make it successful to them that have it. Heaven and earth are continued by thy power, and all things in them are ordered by thy wisdom. Thou art great, O Lord, and greatly to be feared. Thou art good, and worthy of perfect and universal love and obedience. Thy glory shines in all thy works, but above all in our glorious redeemer, and in the church triumphant, where angels and saints perfectly and eternally love and praise thee.

We humbly adore and bless thee for all thine undeserved and forfeited mercies to our souls and bodies, and particularly for our safety and repose the last night, and the health and comfort with which we bow at thy footstool this morning. Keep us in thy fear, faith and love, all this day. Guard our souls from sin, and our bodies from every thing that would hinder us in thy service. We desire to live as in thy presence, and do all to please thee, and secure the salvation of our own and others souls, and to account this our highest honour and happiness. We intreat thee to pardon our sins, accept our services, and give an answer of peace to our prayers, for the sake of thy dear son, our redeemer and saviour, who hath taught us to pray, *Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.* Amen.

An Evening Prayer for a Family.

O THOU high and lofty One, who inhabitest eternity, whose name is holy, and who dwellest in the high and holy place! Thou hast promised to dwell with humble and contrite spirits, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Invited by thy goodness, and constrained by our own necessities, we bow before thee, humbly confessing our sins, with thankful acknowledgments of thy mercies, and earnest cries for grace to help us in every time of need.

We mourn to think of our unconverted state, and how long we walked contrary to thy holy law, and gratified the inclinations of our corrupt and depraved nature. We have been lovers of sinful pleasure, more than lovers of God and holiness; and have idolized the vanities of this perishing world. We have abused thy patience, forbearance and long-suffering, by which thou hast been leading us to repentance. We have hardened our hearts against the warnings of thy word and spirit, thy providences and our own consciences. We have put far from us the day of affliction and death. We have cared more for our bodies, than for our immortal souls; and for the things of time, than how to be saved from hell, and live with Christ in heavenly glory. We have contented ourselves with the form of godliness, without the life and power of it. If any of us have been turned from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God; how long did we resist thy spirit and grace, and hinder our own conversion! If any of us are engaged in the bonds of thy covenant, yet alas! how cold is our love, how inconstant our obedience, and how wavering and divided are our hearts! We have too little differed in temper and conversation from the ungodly, and hence it is that we have tasted so little of the joys of thy salvation.

But,

But, O God ! visit our souls with thy forgiving love. Though our sins deserve thine eternal wrath, yet thy son hath died for us, and in him there is infinite worthiness. For his sake, justify us by thy grace, adopt us into thy family, and make us partakers of the divine nature. Let thy holy spirit fill our minds with faith and wisdom, and our hearts with holiness and love ; even with love to thyself, thy son, thy word and ways, and to all that bear thy holy image. Let the thoughts of thy love to us in Christ, of our pardon and peace with thee, and of the promised heavenly joys, be our daily cordial under all the afflictions and sorrows of life. Teach us to redeem our precious time, to lay up treasure in heaven, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and to trust thy promise, that all other things shall be added to us, so far as they are for our good and thy glory. Help us to bear all sufferings with faith, hope and patience. Make us conquerors over every temptation, and preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom.

Extend thy mercies to the nations and families of the earth, that are involved in ignorance and superstition, in idolatry and will-worship. Say to the north, give up ; and to the south, keep not back ; bring thy sons from far, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth. Let every knee bow to Christ the saviour, and every tongue confess to him. Put away all persecution and oppression for righteousness sake. Purge thy churches from all corruptions in doctrine, discipline, or practice. Never take thy gospel from *Great Britain*, and the countries belonging to it. Pour down the best of blessings on our king, with all his nobles, judges and magistrates, and help them to suppress vice and profaneness, and promote serious godliness. Make the ministers of the gospel as burning and shining lights, to scatter ignorance and error, and lead souls to Christ and glory. Sanctify the afflictions of the afflicted, to take away sin, and to make them partakers of thy holiness ;

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lines; and save others from the peculiar snares of worldly prosperity.

Let thy blessing be on this family, on all our bodies and souls, on all our cares and concerns. Ever keep us in love and peace, and in every holy duty to thee and to one another. We thank thee for the mercies of our past lives, and particularly of this day. Thou hast favoured us with another day for repentance, and preparation for death and eternity. Lord, forgive all our sins of omission and commission. Protect us this night from every evil. Refresh us with rest in sleep. Let our meditation be of thee in the night-watches, and thy comforts ever delight our souls. Prepare us for the duties and events of the morrow. May we live every day in thy fear, and to thy glory; that we may live with thee in a glorious eternal day, where there shall be night no more for ever. Hear and answer us in all our imperfect petitions and supplications, for the sake of our all-prevailing intercessor at thy right hand; O thou *Our father, which art in heaven, &c.*

A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Morning.

GLORIOUS Jehovah! thou art infinitely above the praises of angels; and much more of sinful mortals. They that are far from thee, shall perish; but it is good for us to draw near to thee. Thy mercy has appointed this holy day, that thy love and praise may employ our minds, and be a foretaste of our eternal rest. Breathe upon us the spirit of light, life, and love, quicken us to this heavenly work, and accept us in it, through thy dear son.

Thou art the king eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise, living and true God, the almighty creator of heaven and earth. Thou didst make all things out of nothing by the word of thy power, and dost every moment support and preserve the works of thine hand. How manifold are thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast thou made them all. Thou hast made
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A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Morning. 117

man the noblest inhabitant of this lower world, but a little beneath angels, even with capacities for knowing, loving and serving thee. Thou wast his father, benefactor and chief good, to engage him to thyself in resignation, love and obedience. Thou gavest him a holy, just and good law, that he might please and enjoy thee. But man soon lost his purity and excellence by departing from thee. Thus did man foolishly requite the Lord, and forsake the rock of his salvation. Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. But how did thy mercy rejoice against judgment! How didst thou add to the sentence of death the promise of a redeemer! According to thy promise, Jesus took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. O wonderful condescending love! Angels proclaimed it, and with admiration look into it. How should we then bow at thy footstool in self-abasement, and rise high in thankful praises this day, not only for creating power and goodness, but for redeeming grace and love!

Adored be our Immanuel! He came as the light and life of the world. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, for such an high priest became us. He taught us by his perfect doctrine and example. He made himself by his sufferings and death a sacrifice and propitiation for our sins. O matchless love, that for enemies he should lay down his precious life! He hath conquered and sanctified death and the grave to all believers. He hath procured for us a covenant of grace; and sealed it with his blood. Now, O Father, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Thou hast so loved the world, as to give thine only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. Thou wast in Christ, reconciling the world unto thyself, not imputing to penitent and believing sinners their iniquities. Thou art, by thy ministers, beseeching sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to thee. Thou refusest none that come to thee by Christ. To as many as receive him, thou
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givest power to become the sons of God. With what manner of love hast thou loved guilty rebels, to make them friends and favourites; even heirs of heaven, and joint heirs with Christ!

O that our souls could with greater thankfulness magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our saviour! Thou art to be revered in the assemblies of thy saints, and to be honoured of all that are about thee. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; we had rather be door-keepers in the house of God, than dwell in the palaces of wickedness. When we lived as without thee in the world, thou didst pity us, and make thy word and worship effectual, as some of us have reason to hope, for our conversion and regeneration. How freely didst thou pardon us! How graciously didst thou shew mercy to us, and overcome our hearts with thy love! What a blessed change hath thy spirit wrought in our minds! How many preservations and comforts hast thou afforded us! How many afflictions hast thou moderated and sanctified! What delightful communion have we had with thee in secret, and in social worship! How precious are thy thoughts unto us, O God! How great is the sum of them! Thou, who hast given us grace, wilt give us glory too. These foretastes of love assure us, that we shall be happy with thee for ever. Our hope in thy mercy, thy son, thy covenant, will not make us ashamed. O how far will the praises of the everlasting sabbath excel these feeble services! Quicken, Lord, our desires after that blessed day. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, that we may behold thy glory.

While sabbaths on earth are continued, Lord, make them a blessing to our souls. Assist us in all the religious services of this holy day. Let thy gracious presence go with us to the solemn assembly. Help us against our manifold infirmities, and the sins that most easily beset us in our attendance upon thee. Let thy word be as good seed in our hearts, taking root there, and bringing forth fruit to thy glory and our eternal salvation.

salvation. Let our prayers and praises be spiritual sacrifices, acceptable in thy sight through Jesus Christ.

This day ride forth in the chariot of thy everlasting gospel conquering and to conquer. Let heathen nations be brought to acknowledge their creator and redeemer. In all thy churches let the arm of the Lord be revealed, sinners be converted, and saints be edified in their most holy faith. Continue the gospel in our own land, and give it more abundant success. Bless the king, and all in authority, with wisdom and holiness, and zealous concern for the honour of God and the advancement of real religion. Make the ministers of the gospel faithful to Christ and souls, as those that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.

Heal the sick; ease the pained; succour the tempted; supply the necessitous; be a father to the fatherless and a husband to the widow in thy holy habitation. If afflictions detain any from the publick solemnities of thy day, let them enjoy thy gracious presence in their own dwellings. Fit the dying for a glorious sabbath above. Compleat the number of thy elect, and hasten thy heavenly kingdom.

Blessed be God, that we are in health and comfort, to engage in the duties, and enjoy the privileges of this sabbath. Leave us not to barren hearts and wandering thoughts and affections. But let our conversation be in heaven, from whence we look for our glorious redeemer, whom having not seen, we love, in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, may we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. For his sake we beseech thee to hear us, O thou, *Our father, which art in heaven, &c.*

A Family Prayer for the Lord's-Day Evening.

BLESSED and glorious majesty, we desire humbly to adore thee, as the God and father of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, and through him as our reconciled God and father. We have none in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth we desire beside thee. Thy favour is life, and thy loving kindness is better than life. Thou hast given us all things richly to enjoy, pertaining both to life and godliness. Every day hast thou loaded us with thy benefits. This thy holy day has been especially blessed to our souls. Thou hast taught us the knowledge of thyself and of thy dear son, whom to know is life eternal. Thou hast set before us life and death, blessing and cursing, good and evil, that we might fly from the wrath to come, and secure the blessings of thy people. Thou hast shewed us the evil of sin, the danger of an unconverted state, and the riches of pardoning grace and love. Thou hast invited us by thy precious promises, and hast opened to our view the glories of thy heavenly kingdom. Holiness has in some degree, appeared to us in its beauty, sin in its deformity, Christ in his all-sufficiency to save, and thy holy spirit in his gracious influences to renew our natures, and fit us for a perfect sabbath at thy right hand.

Adored be thine infinite mercy, that any of us have experienced thy recovering grace! Thou hast plucked us as brands out of the burning. Thy pardoning love hath delivered us from guilt and condemnation. Our souls have found a refuge from thine eternal wrath. To us thy promises are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Satan, the world, and death are overcome for us. O death! Where is thy sting? O grave! Where is thy victory? Because Christ lives, we shall live also. Because our head is glorified, we shall be glorified with him. Once we were dead in sin, but are now quickened to spiritual life. Long were we
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in ignorance and unbelief, but are now light in the Lord. Too long were we carnal, sold under sin, but the holy spirit hath renewed us in the law of our mind. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. O that every soul of us, not one excepted, may bear for itself a joyful part in these thanksgivings and praises!

And why, Lord, are we regenerated and sanctified, but to love, and praise, and serve thee? We beseech thee, perfect our weak and languid graces. Make us more holy and heavenly, and bring us nearer to thyself in faith and love, that we may rise higher in thy praises.

Lord, pardon the sins of our holy things. Sprinkle our persons and services with the all-atoning blood of Jesus. Mortify our pride, and clothe us with humility, that when we have done all our duties, we may account ourselves unprofitable servants. Make us meek and patient, serious and sober-minded. Give us grace to keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, that we may possess our vessels in sanctification and honour. Let the love of the world be rooted out of our hearts, and shed abroad thy love there by the holy spirit given unto us. Mortify in us all envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, and help us to love all men, and especially our fellow christians with a pure heart fervently. What we know not, teach us, and wherein we have done iniquity, help us to do so no more. Fix our affections on things above, and let time and the things of time be as nothing to us compared with eternal glory. Fit us for every thing between this and the grave; every service or suffering, every temptation and conflict. In all conditions and relations may we glorify thee, keep a good conscience, and welcome thy whole will with a lively hope and holy joy in thy salvation by Jesus Christ. When we come to die, may we have clear evidences for heaven, finish our course with joy, and an entrance be mini-

sferred unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour.

Accomplish, we beseech thee, thy gracious promises concerning the glory of thy churches in the latter days. Bring in the fulness of the Gentiles; and let all Israel be saved. Destroy Antichrist by the breath of thy mouth, and by the brightness of thine appearing. Let the kingdom of Christ be exalted on the ruins of Satan's kingdom. Send forth thy light and truth to heal the nations, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin to the love of holiness. Let these lands, and the colonies thereto belonging, enjoy the gospel in its efficacy on our hearts and lives. Be very gracious to our sovereign lord the king, and every branch of the royal family; protect his person, prolong his life, sanctify his heart, direct his counsels, and prosper his reign. Make our nobility, judges, and magistrates eminent blessings to the nation. Let the ministers of the gospel be faithful and successful in their great work. Follow with thy special blessing what they have been doing on this thy day, that it may appear in the conviction, conversion, sanctification and salvation of many souls.

Establish our civil and religious liberties; lengthen our peace and tranquillity; favour us with fruitful seasons and the plenty of all good things; bless our provision, and satisfy our poor with bread. Prosper our trade, smile on the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Graciously afford us every personal and family blessing. Take us under thy protection this night. Be with us in all our ways through the following week. Help us to carry with us into every day, duty and occurrence, the temper and sentiments of thy day. May we by this sabbath be brought nearer to, and made fitter for, a glorious eternal sabbath. Having joyfully remembered our Lord's resurrection, may we more ardently look for and hasten to his last coming, and our appearance with him in glory. In him may we be found and accepted, both living and dying, and to him,

him, with thyself, O father, and the spirit of grace and consolation, be honour and glory, dominion and praise, for ever. *Amen.*

The Prayer of an awakened Sinner.

O God! How awful art thou in thy holiness and justice! Yet thou art gracious and ready to receive every penitent and believing sinner. Here am I, prostrate before thee, in hope of thy pardoning and saving mercy. I hear of Jesus Christ, and of his merits, mediation and intercession. I am taught the necessity of repentance, and of being converted and born again, and that without holiness none shall see thy face. I am convinced, Lord, of thy right to me, and to all the love and obedience of my heart and life, because thou art my creator and benefactor. I am convinced that thy laws are holy, just and good. I am convinced of the sinfulness of sin, the vileness of my heart, the abominations of my life, the vanity of this world; and that thou only art able to be the portion and happiness of my soul. I see there is no hope for me, but in sincere return to thee by repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I fear lest the hardness of my heart, and the power of unbelief and of worldly lusts, should prevail against all my convictions. Oh that I had a heart to love thee above all the world, and to delight in thy holy ways, more than in all the pleasures of sin! Oh that I had a heart to believe in Christ, and to live by faith, and not by sight! I have corrupted this heart, but I cannot renew it. I have defiled it, but I cannot cleanse it. I have kindled in it the fire of lust, but I cannot quench it. I have undone myself, rejected my saviour, and resisted the holy spirit; and is there mercy yet for me?

Have pity upon me, O God, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. I have sinned, like a frail and foolish man, but do thou have mercy on

me, as a gracious God. My sin hath abounded, let thy grace much more abound. Christ with infinite expence hath redeemed souls; and that revives my hope. Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me. Turn this heart of stone into a new and tender heart. Fill this presumptuous heart with a necessary care for my own salvation. I see my duty, and yet have not a heart to do it. I see my danger, and run upon it. I foresee death and judgment, without flying to Christ, and redeeming my precious moments. My work is undone, my soul is unready, and if I die this night, where shall I awake? Thy mercy hath long kept me out of hell. Do Thou, O mighty God, who didst raise Jesus Christ from the dead, revive and raise me from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, as thou hast done for millions of sinners.

Lord, heal this evil heart of unbelief; which hath slighted Christ, and departed from the living God. Thou hast left me a promise of entering into heavenly rest, but leave me not to fall short of it by unbelief. Touch this heart with a deep sense of thy love. Kindle in it this heavenly fire. Let the spirit of love fix my soul on the wonderful love of Christ, on Christ crucified, on an ascended, glorified, and interceding saviour, till I am all love to him that died for me. Thou hast promised to give thy holy spirit to them that ask it. Deny me not the grace which thou hast bid me ask, nor the holiness which is thy delight, and without which I shall continue thine enemy to my destruction. Thou hast sworn, that thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live. Let thy mercy spare me. Let thy grace be effectual for my spiritual and eternal life. Let me live the life of grace here, that I may live the life of glory for ever. Look from my guilt and misery to the merits, mediation and intercession of my living redeemer. Hoping and trusting only in his precious name, I smite upon my breast, and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner! Amen and Amen.*

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The Prayer of a true Penitent.

O THOU God of all grace and mercy! Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet pity a miserable sinner, and look upon me thro' the mediation of thy dear son. Had I better answered the design of my creation and redemption, I might now have come to thee with the boldness and confidence of a child, assured of thy love and favour. But I have too long been forgetting the God that made me, the saviour that redeemed me, and the business for which I was sent into the world. I have made my reason a slave to my lusts, and have lived like the brutes that perish. O the precious time I have lost! O the gracious calls I have neglected, and the manifold mercies I have abused! I am ashamed to look back on the years I have spent. What trifles have enticed me from my God! Like *E/sau*, I have profanely sold my birthright for one morsel. To please my fancy, my appetite, my lust, I have set light by all the joys of heaven. I have resisted the holy spirit, wounded my conscience, grieved my best friends, and become a shame and burthen to myself.

But, O my God! be not thou a terror to me. Thou knowest my secret sins, and all their aggravations. My sins have found me out; my fears and sorrows overwhelm me. If I look behind me, my wickedness pursues my soul. If I look before me, I see thy judgment, and know thou wilt not acquit the guilty. If I look within me, there is a defiled heart. If I look without me, there is a world of temptations to deceive and destroy me. If I look above me, I see thine offended majesty. If I look beneath me, I see the place of endless torment. I fear to live, and am more afraid to die.

Yet I have hope, when I look to thine infinite mercy, to thy dear son, and the covenant of thy grace. O God! be merciful to me a sinner. I plead the sacrifice and merits of thy son, and the promises of

forgiveness through him. I condemn myself; but do not thou condemn me. Thou hast opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness: there let me be washed thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleansed from my sin. Soften this rocky heart, and give me repentance unto life. Turn me to thyself, O God of my salvation! and cause thy face to shine upon me. Meet not a returning prodigal in thy deserved wrath, but with thy bowels of compassion. Cast me not away from thy presence, nor sentence me to depart from thee with the workers of iniquity. Are there not multitudes in heaven who were once thine enemies? Let thy mercy be glorified also in my forgiveness and salvation.

I ask not for liberty to sin again, but deliverance from every sinful inclination. Give me the renewing of thy holy spirit; even a new and divine nature, that I may be holiness to the Lord. Enlighten me with the saving knowledge of thyself and thy son Jesus Christ. Fill me with thy love, that my heart may wholly delight in thee. Let thy kingdom and glory, thy word and ways, be my sweetest meditation. Let my treasure be in heaven, and there let me daily converse. Put thy fear into my heart, that I may never depart from thee. Let this world be crucified to me, and I to it, by the cross of Christ. Enable me to walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Keep me from walking any more in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful. Bless me with the communion of thy saints, and with all other means for my sanctification and salvation. Never may I return to folly, or forget the covenant of my God. Help me by thy spirit to quench the first motions to sin, and so fortify me against all temptations, that I may be more than a conqueror. Prepare me for sufferings and death, that I may yield my departing soul into the faithful hands of my redeemer.

I beseech thee, by thy word and spirit, to convince and convert unconverted sinners, and turn them
 them

them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God; that they also may receive the forgiveness of their sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. In him let me be found and accepted, both living and dying; and to him, with thee, and the holy spirit, be everlasting praises. *Amen.*

The Prayer of Parents for their Children.

O GOD! Thou art our God, and we will seek thee; our father's God, and we will exalt thee; and we beseech thee to be our children's God. Thy good providence hath built us up into a family, and we bless thee for the fruit of the womb. But we lament the depraved nature in which our offspring share with us, and all the streams of sin and folly which flow from so corrupt a fountain. We have solemnly taken hold of thy covenant, both for ourselves, and our dear children. Lord, they are thine, save them. Save them from sin, and satan, and this evil world. Save them from the vanity of childhood and youth; incline their hearts to holiness, and give them the wisdom which is from above. Pour thy spirit upon our seed, and thy blessing upon our offspring, that they may be a seed to serve thee, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

Teach and enable us to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to instruct and guide, reprove and exhort them in the meekness of wisdom, and as those who travail in birth again to see Christ formed in their souls. Let none of our's come short of eternal life, or be found on Christ's left hand at the great day. Let it be the joy of our hearts to see them walking in the truth, and setting their faces heaven-ward.

We ask not great things for them belonging to this world. So far as shall be for their spiritual and eter-

nal good, favour them with health and safety, give them direction and blessing in every honest employment, and feed them with food convenient for them. Especially make them wise for their souls and eternity.

If it should please thee to remove any of them from us by death, while they are young, make us humbly submissive and resigned, and firmly persuaded that all is well. If, while they are young, thou shouldst remove us from them, be thou infinitely better to them, than we were capable of being, for with thee the fatherless findeth mercy. And when we are gone to praise thee in heaven, let our dear children be praising thee on earth, and be living, not to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.

Lord, thou knowest our care and concern, and we desire to cast it upon thee. Let serious godliness in our family make our dwelling a house of God, and a nursery for Christ and glory. Let our children do more and better service for thee in their day, than we have done in ours. And before the tribunal of Christ may we joyfully say, Here are we, and the children thou gavest us. Then may parents and children find mercy, and enter together into the joy of our Lord. Grant us this rich grace, for the sake of thy dear and only begotten son, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the holy spirit, be the kingdom, power and glory, for ever. *Amen.*

A Morning Prayer for a young Person.

MOST high and holy God, the creator, governor and judge of all mankind. I desire to adore thy majesty, and worship thee with humble reverence. Thou art infinitely above my highest thoughts and praises. To thy mercy I owe the repose and safety of the night, and that I see the morning with comfort.

I am

I am unworthy to come into thy presence. By nature and practice I am unholy and unclean. My iniquities have rendered me viler than the beasts that perish. I deserve thy eternal displeasure. Lord, have mercy upon me, for the sake of thy son Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for perishing sinners. In his precious blood let all my crimson sins be made white as wool and snow. Let me grow daily in an humble acquaintance with Christ Jesus, as my righteousness and strength. Work in my heart sincere repentance and faith, that I may love God, be fruitful in holiness, be delivered from sin and hell, and be brought safe to thy heavenly kingdom.

Form my soul, O Lord! after thy holy image. Sanctify my thoughts and inclinations, my appetites and passions. Give me a Christ-like meekness and humility. Help me to love all men, especially all that love Christ. Guard me from youthful lusts, and let no iniquity get the victory over me. Preserve me from the defilements of the age and place where I dwell. Suffer me not to be led away by evil companions, nor be ashamed of serious godliness.

Continue this day my health and every enjoyment, so far as thou seest good for me. Enable me to improve every hour, and fulfill all my duties to God and man, that in the evening my reflections may be comfortable. Whenever I am afflicted, let it be in mercy, to take away my sin, and make me partaker of thy holiness. I desire to be thine in life and death, and thro' all eternity.

Pour down thy blessings on all men. Give thy gospel to heathen nations. Let truth and liberty, righteousness and peace, dwell in every land, and the kings of the whole earth bring their power and glory to support true religion. Let the crown sit long and easy on the heads of our protestant king and queen, and enrich them and their royal family with the choicest of thy favours. Let all inferior rulers have wisdom and grace, that they may be blessings to this kingdom.

Make:

Make the ministers of thy word wise to win souls, faithful, and abundantly successful. Grant every gift of providence and grace to my dear relations and friends, which thou seest to be best for them.

Let the prayers of a worthless creature come up before thee this morning with acceptance, through the intercession of thy beloved son. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ, the purchaser of all the mercies I have, or hope for. In him I desire to trust, rejoice, and ever to be found; and to him, with thee, O Father, and the holy spirit, be all honour, glory, and praise, for evermore. *Amen.*

An Evening Prayer for a young Person.

GREAT and glorious, gracious and merciful God and Father in Christ. Look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness, and take notice of a weak and sinful creature, worshipping this evening at thy footstool. Thou madest the heavens and the earth, and knowest all the works of thy hand. My secret thoughts are naked to thine eye. My heart has too often forgot thee. The best of my services are too imperfect to deserve thy love, nor can all my obedience merit the pardon of one of my past transgressions. Let my crimes be washed away in the precious blood of thy dear son, and in him accept a worthless sinner. Spare me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, and let me not go down to the grave in an unpardoned and unholy state. Lengthen out my days, that I may secure my best interest, and my eternal hope. Take out of my heart every evil thought, and subdue every sinful inclination. Let thy blessed spirit renew my soul, and make me holy in heart, in lip, and life. Give me strength against the assaults of temptation, and under all the frailties of youth, that I may not offend my God, crucify afresh my savious, and make continual work for bitter repentance.

Chuse

Chuse my inheritance for me, O Lord, and make me content with the disposals of thy providence in this present life. Let not my heart idolize any thing on earth, but fix my affections on things above, where Christ is at thy right hand. Bear me up under all the afflictions of life with faith and patience. Make me stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, trusting thy gracious promise, that I shall reap a joyful harvest, if I faint not. Search, O God, and try my heart, discover to me wherein I have wandered from thee; give me true repentance, and lead me in the paths of holiness and peace. Fit me for death and judgment, and train me up daily by thy word and ordinances, by thy spirit and grace, for the business and blessedness of thy kingdom in glory.

This evening would I make a fresh surrender of myself to thee for time and eternity. Protect me by thy providence, and guard me by thy grace thro' this night, nor suffer any evil imagination to defile or disquiet me. Whether I wake or sleep, live or die, let me be for ever thine.

Pity a lost world, that lies in sin and wickedness. Send thy gospel among the heathens, and mahometans. Put an end to popish idolatry, superstition and tyranny. Recover thine ancient people the Jews, that they may believe in and love the Lord Jesus. Support and deliver those that are suffering for Christ and his truth. Succeed the gospel to the conversion and salvation of souls. Make our king and queen instruments of good to these nations, and their life and reign long and happy. Counsel the king's counsellors after thy will, and teach our senators the wisdom from above. Let our magistrates be peace, and our exactors righteousness, and the ministers of the gospel burning and shining lights. Unite to thyself in the bonds of thy covenant all that are related to me in the bonds of nature, that they may share in eternal blessings.

I praise thee, O my God, for ease and health, and all the comforts of this day and of my whole life. Above all, I bless thee for Jesus Christ, to purchase salvation.

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salvation for me by his most precious blood; that I was born and brought up under the sound of thy gospel, and have been early acquainted with thy holy word, wherein is all my hope of everlasting life and glory. I beseech thee to perfume my unworthy prayers and praises with the much incense of my redeemer's intercession, for he is most worthy. And in his name and words let me further call upon thee, as *Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*

The young Person's Prayer for Lord's-Day Morning.

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, a God doing wonders. Wonders of goodness and mercy hast thou done for me, a sinful creature, through my whole life, and particularly the last week. After so many seasons of grace, which I have misimproved, thou hast brought me to another day of the son of man. Help me to remember the resurrection of my Lord, and let my heart rise to the throne of his glory. Banish from my soul every vain thought, that I may begin and spend this holy day, to thy honour and my own salvation.

Blessed be thy name, O heavenly Father, who hast pitied a sinful world, and sent thy dear son to die that we might live, and rise again that we might be justified. Blessed be Jesus, who took our flesh and blood, and by his sufferings and death, became a reconciler of sinful creatures to thine offended majesty. Adored be divine mercy, which sent a glorious gospel to my native land, and put into my hands the sacred volume, in which I read the covenant of grace, and learn the way to everlasting life.

Help me this day to attend thy word and the ordinances of thy house, with pleasure and profit. Let thy ministers come to the assemblies of thy people in the

the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and particularly to my soul. O that my conscience may this day be awakened, my understanding enlightened, my will bowed to the obedience of faith, my affections fixed on heavenly things, and my heart enriched with divine graces and comforts! Make me fervent in prayer, and joyful in praise. Deliver me from a wandering eye and heart. Let not vain thoughts lodge within me, or interrupt my humble converse with thee. Let me love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwells, and at the close of publick worship may I find my heart the fitter for devout retirement.

Graciously accept this morning sacrifice for Jesus' sake, through the virtue of his atoning blood and prevailing intercession. In the evening let my own experience joyfully testify, that a day spent in nearness to God, is better than a thousand spent in sinful pleasures. And while I am favoured with such means of grace, and foretastes of glory, may I look and long more ardently for the better work and worship of an infinitely better sabbath at thy right hand. Hear in heaven, thy dwelling place, and when thou hearest, forgive; and do for me and for all thine according to the riches of thy grace in the great redeemer, to whom, with thyself, and the holy spirit, be endless praises. *Amen.*

The young Person's Prayer for Lord's-Day Evening.

ETERNAL Father! thou art the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him the God of all comfort and consolation. What grace and mercy hast thou bestowed on a sinful worm! Who and what am I, that the Lord of glory should draw me nigh to himself! Why should I find a place in thy house, and be numbered among thy worshippers!
How

How great is my privilege, to hear and read thy word, to join with thy saints in prayer and praise, and have the unsearchable riches of Christ opened to my impoverished soul! But, Lord, was there a single worshipper more unworthy, more vain and trifling, more dull and lifeless, more wandering and distracted, than I have been? How little of thy word has been treasured up in my heart? How little have I relished the truths of Christ, or felt the power of his grace and love, or discovered the evil of sin and beauty of holiness?

Forgive, I beseech thee, the iniquities of my holy things, and sprinkle my person and services with the all-atoning blood of Jesus. Though thy blessed day be almost gone, let not the work of it be altogether lost. O that I may retain the sense and savour of thy word for many days to come! Let the good seed take root in my heart, and bring forth fruits of righteousness in my future temper and conversation. I desire to have more love to thyself, and to Jesus the son of thy love, and more love to my neighbour for Jesus' sake. I desire to hate sin more than ever, and be more watchful against every temptation of Satan and the world, and more resolute to mortify every corruption of my heart. Let thy grace be sufficient for me, and thy strength be made perfect in my weakness.

Blessed be God, who has not utterly forsaken his own ordinances. I praise thee for some breathings of soul towards thee, some holy exercises of faith and love, of submission and obedience, of repentance and self dedication; some delight in thy worship, both in the publick assembly and in devout retirement. Carry on in me thy good work, till it be finished in heavenly joy and praise in thy immediate presence.

Pity the multitudes that never had the gospel, and let the day-spring from on high visit them. Pity those also, who are groaning in secret, because their persecutors and oppressors shut up the doors of thy sanctuary against them. Let truth and liberty, grace and peace, fill the whole earth. Continue thy blessings

sings on our rulers, who watch over our civil and religious privileges. Heal and unite, edify and multiply the churches of Christ, and take out of them every thing that is contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus. And prepare my soul, by all the seasons of grace I am enjoying below, for the blessed assembly of saints and angels in the church triumphant above. Grant this, most merciful father, for Christ's sake, in whom I desire to trust, rejoice, and be ever found; and to whom, with thee, and the holy spirit, be all honour, glory and praise, for ever. *Amen.*

The Prayer of one going to the Lord's-Table.

O THOU God of ordinances! I thank thee for the covenant of thy grace, and the appointed seals of it. I desire to give myself to thee, but fear I should approach to holy things unworthily. Hast not thou filled me with reverence for this command of my dying saviour, with this desire of communion with thee, and with this willingness to be wholly thine? Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, try my reins and my heart. Am I indulging any secret sin? Do I allow myself in the neglect of any holy precept? Let me not wrong my soul, by a sinful absence from thy table. Let thy word, providence, and spirit concur to make my way plain before me. Scatter my doubts. Give me stronger faith and love. O that the views of a crucified saviour may deeply impress my mind, and a sense of his dying love constrain me, to give up myself to him more solemnly than I have ever yet done!

Lord, shew me thy covenant, and help me to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. I believe; Lord, help thou mine unbelief, and increase my faith. Kindle my repentance, and strike this rocky heart, that it may bleed at the remembrance of my past follies, and confirm my
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resolutions, that I may have nothing more to do with idols. I abhor myself, that I love my God, my saviour, no better. Let that spark become a flame; let that flame be strong and steady, and the proofs of it appear in my holy obedience. O shed abroad thy love in my heart, by the holy spirit given unto me! Breathe upon this clod, and it shall warm. Draw me, and I shall run after thee. I had rather love thee, than have all the treasures on earth. O my God, let me not be cold and lifeless at that solemnity, where I am to commemorate the most glorious love, that was ever known or heard of! Be with my spirit, help mine infirmities, accept me, and unite my heart to thee in covenant in everlasting bonds, through my redeemer. *Amen.*

The Prayer of one sick, but unprepared to die.

MERCIFUL God! reject me not, while, in bodily pain and sorrow, and with anguish of mind for sin and guilt, I fly to thy grace in Christ. Though I have trifled away the day of my salvation, say not, it is now too late. Thy promises are large and free. Pity my misery, and forgive my iniquities, through the only redeemer of lost souls. If the sufferings of my flesh seem so grievous, how shall my soul bear thy wrath for ever? O give me repentance unto life! Let thy spirit renew my soul. Sanctify my affliction, to take away my sins, and to make me partaker of thy holiness. Lord, spare me a little, to make better preparation for my great change, before I go hence, and am seen no more. I dread to appear before thy bar in an unpardoned and unholy state. Renew my days on earth; and renew my heart, that I may live to God and Christ, to holiness and heaven. I have abused thy patience and forbearance, lost my precious time, and forfeited life and hope. I foresaw this day, but I took not warning. I am in dread of my sins, and of thy justice and holiness. O eternity! eternity!

eternity!—Lord, try me once more with a day of grace. Cut not off my time, till I am ready for eternity. I condemn myself, but do not thou condemn me. Sanctify me by thy spirit, wash me in thy son's blood, and give me such a sight of heaven by faith and hope, that I may willingly die, and come to thee. My sin hath abounded, let thy grace much more abound. Glorify thy grace in Christ by my pardon, acceptance and eternal life. Through the all-sufficient saviour, let me be reconciled to thee, adopted into thy family, and be made an heir of glory and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Whether I live, or die, I desire to be thine. To thee, O thou God and father of mercies, I give up myself; and O that I could with joyful confidence call thee my reconciled God and father! Though I deserve nothing else but to dwell for ever with devils, yet fill me now with thy grace and love, and at death receive me to thy glory, that with angels and saints I may praise my creator, my redeemer, and my sanctifier for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Prayer of a Christian near Death.

O THOU sovereign of life and death, of earth and heaven! Thy mercy brought me into the world, kept me from a thousand dangers, and gave me innumerable blessings of life and godliness. Thy mercy convinced and converted me, renewed and sanctified my heart, and formed Christ in me. O amazing mercy, that I am not dying in an impenitent and christless state! I thank thee for the means of grace, and the hopes of glory. I thank thee for the fruits of Canaan through the wilderness, and now on the brink of Jordan. I thank thee for the cordials of thy great and precious promises, and that they are now as precious as ever. I covenanted with thee for eternal

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as the gift of thy free grace, through Jesus Christ my Lord. In his name I humbly claim it. To thine hand I commit this departing spirit. I am thine, save me. I have fled to thy son's cross. I have renounced all dependance on any worthiness of my own. I come to thee as a sinner, believing in Christ for pardon and salvation. Let me have my lot among the followers of Jesus. I know in whom I have believed. I rejoice, that I am in the hands of the good shepherd. I thank thee, that, after this long absence, thou art calling me home, to my glorious eternal home. But forsake not the world I am leaving, nor thy church from which I am removing. Having bought it with an inestimable price, still guard it, purify it, and unite it more and more, till all flesh shall see thy salvation. Let my few remaining moments on earth be spent for thy glory. Whatever this flesh may suffer, let my soul be rising to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Let faith be strong in the last hour. Let me ascend in the chariot of love and praise, and for ever sing the song of *Moses* and the *Lamb*. Even so, come Lord Jesus, come surely, come quickly. *Amen.*

T H E E N D.